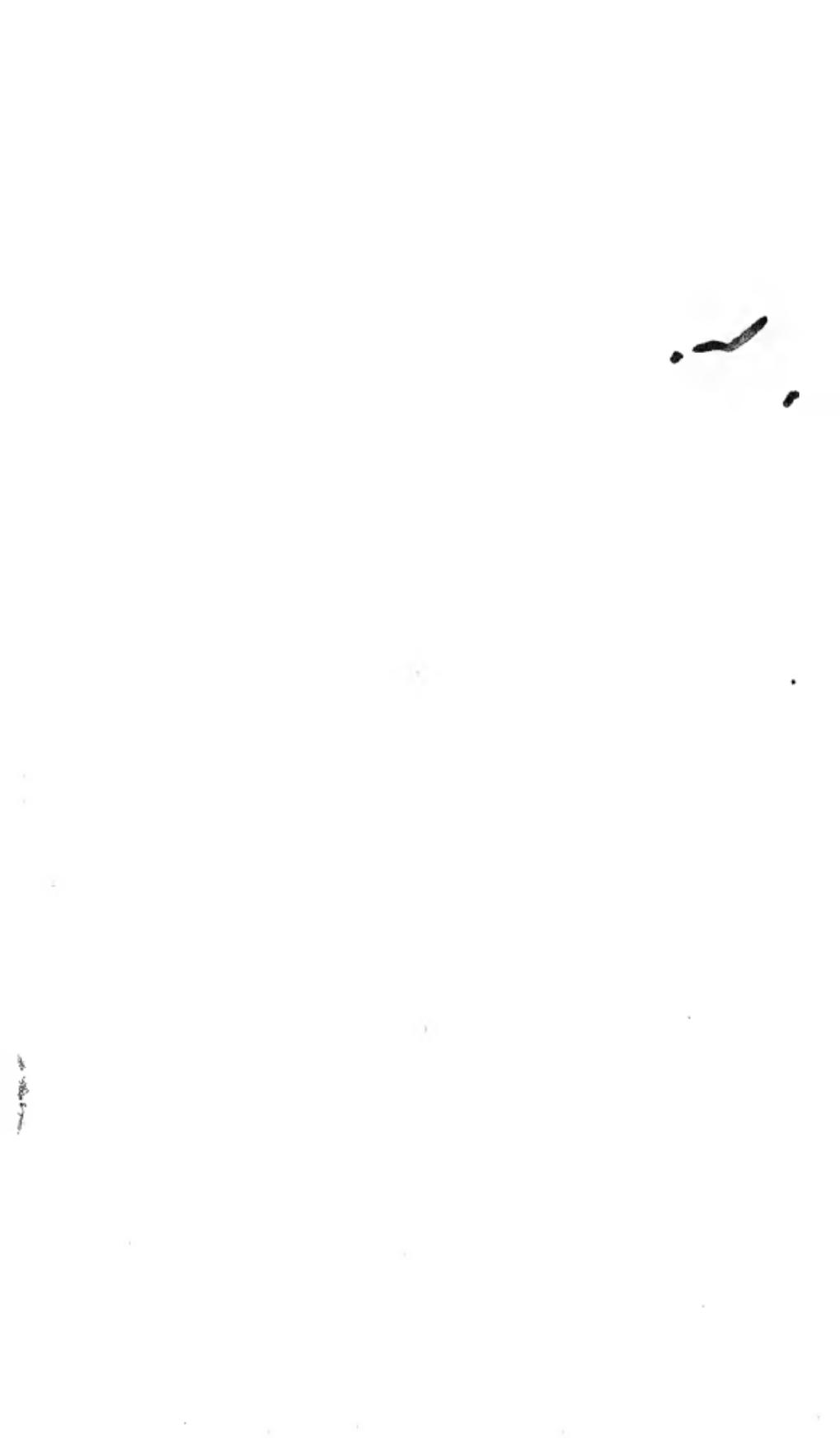


STUDIES AND SKETCHES



STUDIES AND SKETCHES

BY
RT. HON. H. H. ASQUITH
F.R.S., D.C.L., LL.D.
Hon. Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford



London :
HUTCHINSON & CO., Paternoster Row

—

P R E F A C E

Several of the chapters in this volume have been already published in whole or in part. I have to acknowledge with gratitude the courteous permission to re-publish, which has been given by the Delegates of the Oxford University Press, and the editors and proprietors of the "Spectator," of "John o' London's Weekly," the "Review of Reviews," and the "Sunday Times."

H. H. A.

1st Jan. 1924.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I.—SOME ASPECTS OF THE VICTORIAN AGE	3
II.—THE LAST CRUSADE	37
III.—SOME POPULAR FRENZIES IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.	51
IV.—DR. JOHNSON AND FANNY BURNEY	77
V.—SIR HENRY WOTTON	97
VI.—READING AND WRITING	115
VII.—TEACHING AND LEARNING	131
VIII.—ECONOMIC THEORIZING	141
IX.—MODERN BIOGRAPHERS	147
X.—THE "ANTIGONE"	155
XI.—THE ART OF TACITUS	167
XII.—THE AGE OF DEMOSTHENES.	173
XIII.—JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN	185
XIV.—SIR H. CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN (1).	191
XV.—SIR H. CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN (2).	203

I

SOME ASPECTS OF THE VICTORIAN
AGE



I

SOME ASPECTS OF THE VICTORIAN AGE*

IT is a curious fact in English history that the only Sovereigns who have given their names to an epoch have been three reigning Queens. No one talks of the Age of Edward I., or of Henry VIII., or of George III., though their reigns were all times of great national movement, both in the sphere of action and in the sphere of thought. But the Age of Elizabeth, and the Age of Queen Anne, have passed into the conventional dialect of chronology : and although it is less than twenty years since the death of Queen Victoria, we can feel little doubt that, for generations to come, the historian will speak of the Victorian Age.

If we use the term Age, as we do in this context, in the sense of a particular and defined phase in the development of the nation, its boundaries obviously cannot be measured with the precision of an astronomical calendar. Both the Age of Elizabeth and the Age of Anne survived in point

* Romanes Lecture, delivered before the University of Oxford in 1918.

of time the monarchs who have given them their name. Shakespeare and Bacon—the two Elizabethan giants—produced their richest and most memorable work after the accession of James I. The achievements of the three greatest Englishmen in the reign of Anne (as great in their several departments as perhaps any three in English history), Newton, Marlborough, and Wren, were practically completed before the Queen's death ; but Pope, Bolingbroke, Addison, and not a few others, continued to preserve the traditions of the Age of Anne, projecting like a salient into the dull prosaic levels of the early Hanoverian era.

On the other hand, that which we roughly call the Victorian Age, in those of its features which will give it a characteristic and individual place in history, was over some time—a decade at least—before the end of the great Queen's reign. Not only had its dominating personalities, with one or two exceptions, disappeared ; but the transformation, subtle, at first almost imperceptible, of which we are still witnessing the development, had already set in ; and a new chapter (perhaps one might say a new volume) had been opened in the story of our national life.

It is of some aspects of the Victorian Age—in this limited sense—that I propose to speak to-day. I say purposely of "*some* aspects ;" for not only would anything in the nature of an

exhaustive review be impossible within the confines of an hour, but the terms of the Trust under which this Lecture is given exclude by implication from permissible subjects the two great controversial domains of politics and theology ; each of which absorbed a large part of the energies of the Victorians, great and small ; and which together will supply—unless and until the current estimates of what is relatively important in the life of communities are revised—the most copious material to the future historian of the time.

Within the area as so circumscribed, the first and most obvious thing to arrest the attention, in any survey of the Victorian Age, is the almost paradoxical incongruity between what may be broadly termed its outward and its inward life. To the theorists (if there are any left), as to the conditions which favour the efflorescence of creative genius, it presents one of the most baffling of problems. It was an era when England was ruled by the middle class, who lived and moved, for the most part—and quite contentedly—in unpicturesque and uninspiring surroundings. Even the “growing pains” of what we call democracy were hardly beginning to be felt. The “red fool-fury of the Seine,” at which Tennyson scoffed, was regarded as a thing only fit for foreigners. The country (except for the Crimean War) was at peace with

all Europe; and the Victorians though not so insular in their habits of mind and feeling as they are sometimes represented, and warmed from time to time with a genuine sympathy for what one of their great orators once described as "nationalities rightly struggling to be free," were not a race of knights errant. They concentrated their main efforts upon the improvement of the mechanism of industry and communication, and upon the attainment of the commercial and financial primacy of the world. It is not fair to say that they were wholly wrapped up in Materialism, and the pursuit of wealth and comfort. But it took a great deal to make them realize—as, thanks to Lord Shaftesbury and his free-lance allies, Carlyle and Dickens, they came to realize—that they might be paying too high a price for capturing the markets of the world in a system of production which crippled and stunted and decimated the women and children of the country. They continued to the end to think that the ideal to be set before any workman, of more than average capacity and ambition, was that he might in time rise from his own class, and become an employer of workmen himself. On the whole, the general attitude of mind was one of contentment, or at the lowest of acquiescence, which at times took the more challenging note of an almost strident self-

complacency : such as is sounded in those famous speeches of Mr. Lowe in 1866-7, which formed one of the favourite texts of Matthew Arnold's Epistles to the Philistines.

Such, in broad outline, was the outside atmosphere, in which the intellectual soil, with a fecundity which hardly failed for forty years, produced, in almost unrivalled profusion, the masterpieces of the Victorian Age. Nothing can be more striking, or more unaccountable upon any abstract theory, than the copiousness and the variety of its Personal resources. In a recently published volume—the most trenchant and brilliant series of biographical and historical studies which I have read for a long time—Mr. Lytton Strachey, under the modest title “Eminent Victorians,”* has put on his canvas four figures (as unlike one another as any four people could be), Cardinal Manning, Florence Nightingale, Dr. Arnold, and General Gordon. None of the four can be said to have contributed much of permanent importance to the literature or art or science of their time ; but each of them, in his or her day, was a prominent and potent personality ; and perhaps one may be allowed to say that they are in less danger than ever of being forgotten, now that they have been re-created for the English readers of the

* “Eminent Victorians,” by Lytton Strachey (Chatto and Windus, 1918).

future (not in a spirit of blind hero-worship) by Mr. Strachey's subtle and suggestive art. But men and women of action tend to gravitate in the direction either of politics or religion ; the two fields which are fenced off from us here to-day. So let me for the moment leave them out of the account.

In the intellectual sphere it will be found that most of the great names of the Victorian Age are those of men and women born in the ten years between 1809 and 1819. Carlyle, Macaulay, Disraeli, J. S. Mill are all a little earlier, and Herbert Spencer, Matthew Arnold, Millais, George Meredith a little later. But the Calendar of those ten years is worth recounting :

- In 1809 Darwin, Gladstone, Tennyson.*
- „ 1811 Thackeray.
- „ 1812 Dickens, Robert Browning.
- „ 1816 Charlotte Brontë.
- „ 1819 (the birth year of Queen Victoria herself) George Eliot, Charles Kingsley, Ruskin.

I have included Disraeli and Gladstone not because, but in spite, of their being politicians.

At the Queen's accession the eldest of these was twenty-eight and the youngest eighteen. That year (1837)—the opening scene of the Victorian Drama—fitly heralded the future ; for in it were given to the English world two

* In America, Lincoln and Poe.

immortal works, opposite as the poles in character, but each disclosing for the first time the real genius of its author : Dickens's " Pickwick Papers," and Carlyle's " French Revolution." During the decade which followed our literature was enriched by " Vanity Fair," " Jane Eyre," the first volume of " Modern Painters," and the first two volumes of Macaulay's " History."

A distinguished man, happily still amongst us, who was born near the beginning of the Queen's reign, and was later on an ornament both of the forensic and the political world—Sir Edward Clarke—has recently produced an interesting autobiography.* He did not, in his formative years, enjoy the advantages—perhaps in these days one ought to add, or suffer from the drawbacks—of a Public School and University Education. He was to a large extent his own teacher, and was a voracious reader, especially of contemporary English. He gives us a list, year by year, of the books which appeared during his boyhood from 1850 to 1859 : perhaps, in the department of Literature, the most fruitful decade in the whole Victorian era.

I will not go through his catalogue, which every one should read and study ; but I will take two or three years as samples, sometimes

* " Memories of my Life," by Sir Edward Clarke (Murray, 1918).

omitting one or two of Sir E. Clarke's specimens, and sometimes adding one or two, for which he has not found a place.

Take first 1850—the year of “Pendennis,” “In Memoriam,” and “Christmas Eve and Easter Day.” Or again, 1855, with “Maud,” “Men and Women,” “The Virginians,” Macaulay’s third and fourth volumes, and Herbert Spencer’s “Psychology.” Or, lastly, 1859, with the “Idylls of the King,” “Adam Bede,” “The Tale of Two Cities,” “The Ordeal of Richard Feverel,” Edward Fitzgerald’s “Rubaiyát,” and (in some ways the most epoch-making of them all) Darwin’s “Origin of Species.” Even this marvellous and almost unexampled array gives an inadequate idea of the resources of Victorian genius when the Age was at its zenith. For, within the same ten years, we have the first published poems of Matthew Arnold and William Morris, Ruskin’s “Stones of Venice,” the first novel of Anthony Trollope, Mrs. Gaskell’s “Cranford,” Mill’s “Liberty,” and the best work of Charles Kingsley. Kingsley, by the way, at the close of the decade, was on the eve of the ill-advised adventure which, to the lasting benefit of all lovers of the purest and finest English prose, was the occasion for the appearance in 1864 of Newman’s “Apologia.” The stream, if never afterwards quite so full and strong, did not

dry up ; it was for years later being constantly reinforced and vitalized by new tributaries, down to the very confines of the Victorian Age.

The wind blows where it lists : and no theory of causation, with which I am acquainted—whether of heredity, or environment, or of any combination or permutation of possible or imaginable antecedents—can adequately account for these indisputable facts. It is right, moreover, to record, that the Victorian public, the men in the street at whom Matthew Arnold gibed, the subscribers to the circulating libraries, which then went far to make or unmake the fortunes of an author, were neither unappreciative, nor exclusive in their appreciations. It is true that the two greatest of the women writers of the age—Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot—were, at the outset of their careers, roughly handled by the orthodox and fashionable critics. But both came very soon into their own. In the case of another pair of the most gifted authors of the time, Robert Browning and George Meredith, each of whom had to wait before he could make good his claims to pass, from the worship of a coterie, into the recognized Pantheon, the fault lay, perhaps, as much with the perversity of the writer as with the dullness of the public. Mr. Chesterton in his suggestive little book (“The Victorian

Age in Literature"**) says of Browning—and I respectfully agree with him—that it is not true that he was careless of form or style. Still less (I think) is it true of Meredith. Mr. Herbert Paul, in a charming Essay on The Victorian Novel,† cites a journalist of the day who was allowed by his editor to assert that the "‘Amazing Marriage’ was by no means devoid of interest, but it was a pity that Mr. Meredith could not manage to write like other people;" a remark which, now that Meredith has become, *malgré lui*, the founder of a cult, will seem to his votaries the last word of Victorian Philistinism. The real criticism of both Browning and Meredith in this respect would seem to be that, having a rare, if not unique, command of the resources of language, they became, by choice or by caprice, experimentalists—one might almost say adventurers—in the art of expression. They teased their contemporaries; and perhaps they have impaired their chances with posterity (as Sir Joshua Reynolds is said to have done through resorting, in the later stages of his career, to strange pigments of his own invention) by doing a certain violence to the medium in which they worked. But there is no instance (so far as

* "The Victorian Age in Literature," by G. K. Chesterton (Home University Library, Williams and Norgate).

† "Men and Letters," by Herbert Paul (John Lane, 1901).

we know) among the Victorians of the premature cutting off, by public neglect or critical vituperation, of some "inheritor of unfulfilled renown"—such as was the actual case of Chatterton, or the legendary case of Keats.

Of the imaginative writers of the Victorian Age, the Poets and the Novelists, it would be impossible to say too much, and difficult to say anything that has not been better said before. If we want to measure the sum of our total indebtedness to them, we have only to try and realize how much the thoughts and the modes of speech of the average man, throughout the English-speaking world, have been and are unconsciously coloured by their creations and inventions. Great as were Browning and Tennyson, it is the Novelists rather than the Poets who have left the deepest imprint on popular imagination and popular speech. It may be true that none of them had Scott's width of range, or Jane Austen's fine, sure touch; but with the names that I have already enumerated on our lips we may safely challenge the world to produce any other epoch in which this form of creative art has displayed the same exuberance of wealth and variety. Macaulay had a weakness, which, perhaps, we may say here he carried with him from Cambridge, for arranging the subjects of his admiration—great men, great books, great cities, great pictures, great poems and histories

—in an imaginary order of merit. He says, for example, somewhere in his letters, that he puts Cicero (of whom he was a devoted and life-long reader) “at the head of the minds of the second order :” not quite a Wrangler (as it were), but a good Senior Optime. It used to be a favourite critical exercise among less eminent Victorians than Macaulay to discuss which was the greater writer—Dickens or Thackeray ? Tennyson or Browning ? Charlotte Brontë or George Eliot ? I think we are all agreed now that comparisons of this kind are, if not futile, at least unprofitable. Men and women of creative genius cannot be labelled and classified, like plants or politicians. Nor do the masterpieces of Victorian fiction, either separately or collectively, belong to any of the recognized schools. As Mr. Chesterton has well pointed out, Dickens and Thackeray combine, each after his own artistic method, both Realism and Romance.

Let me, before I turn to another branch of my topic, say a word more of one whom I mentioned a few moments ago—Charles Kingsley. The great Mirabeau said of his younger brother, who went by the nickname of “Barrel” Mirabeau : “In any other family than ours he would be regarded as a scapegrace and a wit.” So, perhaps, if he were not overshadowed by his mightier contemporaries, Charles Kingsley would to-day have a greater reputation both as novelist and poet.

Much of his fiction (like some of Mrs. Gaskell's and Disraeli's) is too deeply immersed in the local and passing conditions of Victorian life to be readable now. But he had remarkable powers both of perception and description. In poetry he has left two or three lyrics which are worthy (and this is high praise) to be placed side by side with Tennyson's best. And in the supremely difficult art of writing for Children, which requires, in addition to command over the unexpected and the picturesque, the power of mixing good sense with good nonsense, and letting the one glide imperceptibly into the other, he has not been surpassed ; except perhaps by his Victorian contemporary, whom we here in Oxford claim as especially our own, Lewis Carroll.

I have said or implied that the note of revolt is not characteristic of the Victorian Age. But the Victorians were not allowed to wax fat, and to bask in the sunshine of their prosperity and content, without reproof, exhortation, and even denunciation. The prophetic office has rarely in history been better filled or more faithfully exercised. Carlyle taught his contemporaries, time after time (as on a famous occasion Gideon taught the men of Succoth), with "thorns of the wilderness and briers."* Ruskin—a literary portent, if there ever was one, without pedigree or posterity, as perfect an artist in words at

* Judges viii., 16.

twenty-one as at any stage of his career—was moved by the tragic contrasts and failures of the Victorian civilization (as he saw it), to turn aside from the glad tidings of the gospel of Beauty, which he had preached with an incomparable wealth of eloquence, insight, and spiritual fervour. He turned aside that he might deliver, with the same faith and even deeper passion, to a perverse generation who had made for themselves false gods, his stern and solemn message of warning and of judgement to come. In 1860, as soon as he had finished the fifth and last volume of "Modern Painters," he started the publication in the *Cornhill Magazine* of "Unto This Last," in which he exposed and denounced the current conceptions of such elementary matters as Wealth and Value. It aroused a tornado of abuse and ridicule from the orthodox economists; "the world" (wrote one of their organs) "was not going to be preached to death by a mad governess:" and even Thackeray himself, and his astute publisher, became so much alarmed that, after three instalments had appeared, they stopped its further publication in their Magazine.* Ruskin was always inclined to regard "Unto This Last" as his highest achievement in point of style, and his judgement is confirmed by two such accomplished

* The whole story is well told in Cook's "Life of Ruskin," Vol. II., ch. 1.

critics as Mr. Frederic Harrison and Mr. Mackail. What is more important, he never flinched from his new mission, and continued to the end of his days, with an ever-growing following, not for the sake of destruction only, but of reconstruction also, to bombard the citadel of Victorian Economics. Matthew Arnold, a fine poet and an unsurpassed literary critic, also became one of the Prophets. What drove him into the pulpit was, not so much moral resentment at the social paradoxes of his time, as intellectual irritation and impatience at the stupidity and sterility of contemporary life. The whole community—upper, middle, and lower classes—Barbarians, Philistines, Populace—seemed to him to be equally wanting in the “one thing needful.” But the Philistine *bourgeoisie* became his favourite target, with their narrow intellectual and spiritual outlook, their barren daily treadmill of routine, their absorption in superficial goods, their smug and sordid self-complacency. He might have taken as his text a pregnant sentence which is to be found in one of Bishop Butler’s Sermons : unfortunately (as I think), though Arnold was not without the traditional Oxford regard for Butler, his favourite episcopal writer was Bishop Wilson—a man of a very different stamp. “It is as easy,” says Butler, “to close the eyes of the mind as those of the body.”* And in

* Butler’s Sermons : Sermon X., “Upon Self-Deceit.”

Arnold's view the one thing needful to humanize and vitalize this stolid visionless mass was what he called Culture.* Culture (as he conceives it) consists in the possession within of a perennial source of Sweetness and Light—an unhappy phrase which he borrowed from Swift, and which became perhaps his most irritating catchword—and manifests itself in a balance of interests, a catholic sympathy, a due sense of relative values, a wide outlook upon life. If Carlyle and Ruskin scourged and lashed their generation with briars and scorpions, Matthew Arnold may be said to have harassed and pricked it with a well-burnished stiletto. Let me add to this *catena* of prophetic literature a further notable contribution, the "Essay on Compromise," by John Morley, which appeared in the early seventies. From a quite different point of view, and with methods of thinking and style which were both new and singularly impressive, it is a ruthless unveiling of some characteristic Victorian insincerities. Exposed to the varied methods of these preachers of genius, the Victorians had no excuse if they continued in a state of spiritual torpor.

The number of people who really think in any age and country is very limited, and still smaller is the number of those who think for themselves. Socrates found it to be so in the highly intelligent

* "Culture and Anarchy" (Smith, Elder and Co., 1869). The motto is : *Estote ergo vos perfecti.*

and favoured community in which he was such a disturbing element. It is certainly not easy to say how far the philosophic developments, which went on in England during the Victorian Age, tinged or biased the thoughts of the average man. I may say nothing to-day about the religious aspect of the matter. The rise and fall of Tractarianism ; the fears and the hopes aroused by the Roman Catholic propaganda and the so-called Papal Aggression ; the powerful influence of that remarkable set of personalities who were rather crudely grouped as the "Broad Church ;" the sway of the Preachers, such as Robertson at one extreme; and Spurgeon at the other (for the Victorians were a Church-going and Chapel-going people) : all these are topics which an historian of the Age will have to sort into their due proportions and perspective.

We are free, however, to indicate the general speculative tendencies which were at work, and, incidentally, to form a rough estimate of their place in the history of Thought. During the first twenty-five years of the Queen's reign, Utilitarianism (to borrow an apt phrase from Mr. Chesterton) was the "philosophy in office"—Utilitarianism, not in the crude and aggressive dogmatic setting of Bentham and the elder Mill, but with its rough edges smoothed, its corners rounded, and its Hedonism refined and sublimated, by John Stuart Mill. The younger Mill

may, indeed, be styled Purveyor-general of Thought for the early Victorians. He supplied their men of science with Logic, and their men of business with Political Economy; and such men of pure thought as there were, for the most part, sat for a generation at his feet. Even when I came up to Oxford in 1870 his influence was still predominant, though it was being sapped and slowly undermined. The invaders came from two very different camps—one set, in the guise of allies who claimed that their weapons were better up to date; the other set breathing open defiance, and bent upon conquest and annexation. The former arrayed themselves under the banner of Herbert Spencer, one of the notable men of the Age, who devoted himself to the things of the Intellect with a single-mindedness, and an indifference to the world, the flesh and the devil, which recall the lives of the early Renaissance scholars. After an unconventional and fragmentary education, he began active life at the age of seventeen in the first year of the Queen's reign as a railway engineer.* By sheer force of intellect and character, incredible industry, magnificent intrepidity, and, one must add, colossal self-confidence, he was able, before he was forty, to conceive and draw up, in prospectus form, a scheme of Synthetic Philosophy, which for range

* "An Autobiography," by Herbert Spencer (Williams and Nor-gate, 1904).

of compass is bold to the limits of audacity, and to the working out of which he devoted all the remainder of a long and strenuous life. I will reserve anything that I have to say of him and his associates, the Evolutionists, until we come later on to a still greater name—that of Charles Darwin.

The open assault upon the fashionable cult of Mill came (as I have said) from a different camp, and had its head-quarters here in Oxford. I leave on one side (for it was a mere episode) the rather dreary dialectical campaign, in the fifties and the early sixties, over the Limits of the Knowable, in which Hamilton and Mansel and Mill himself spilt Dead Seas of ink.* Even in my undergraduate days it was almost as obsolete as the Bangorian Controversy ; and it is only remembered now, if it is remembered at all, for Mill's famous declaration as to the conditions under which he, the most impeccable of mankind, was prepared to go to Hell. The protagonists of the Idealistic revolt, or reaction —whichever it is to be called—T. H. Green and Edward Caird, were both nurtured at Balliol in the days of Jowett's ascendancy.

* There is a lively summary of this business in a contemporary letter of that fine and subtle thinker, Henry Sidgwick. See "Henry Sidgwick : A Memoir" (Macmillan, 1906), pp. 129-130. Sidgwick adds : "John Grote is going to bring out a book. *Rough Thoughts* on something he calls it : they are sure to be rough, and sure to be thoughts." This was J. Grote's "*Exploratio Philosophica*" (1865) : a most remarkable fragment.

Jowett was the most unselfish and devoted of College tutors, and one of the rarest mixtures ever seen of worldly and unworldly wisdom. He was also a well furnished philosopher, and had made himself familiar, in the intervals of lecturing upon and translating the masterpieces of antiquity, with the successors of Kant—Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and the rest. In the exploration of that difficult and dimly lighted territory, where it is often not easy to see the wood for the trees or the trees for the wood, he was, among Englishmen, one of the pioneers. It was not the kind of place to provide a permanent home for his fastidious and eclectic mind, and when Green, who had followed him, came back full of enthusiasm from his quest, Jowett "*avait déjà passé par là.*" Green was a man of a very different type. A certain Puritan austerity and fervour streaked his intellect, as it dominated his life. He was no mere borrower of other men's ideas and systems. Indeed, both in his methods of thinking and his style of expression he had an almost angular individuality, which perhaps made him a less effective propagandist outside than his more fluent and facile fellow thinker, Edward Caird. But in teaching authority—in controlling and moulding influence over the ductile academic material—he was among the most potent of the Victorians.

I shall not trace the development of the

struggle; still less pronounce any judgement upon its final issue. That would carry us well over the Victorian boundary. But I may quote the contemporary opinion of a great Oxford pundit of those days, who had long since ceased to have (in any dogmatic sense) opinions of his own—Mark Pattison. Pattison was a man of deep and wide erudition, who had been disappointed in life, and whose output, in volume at any rate, was far below his powers. Words which were written in a mood of candid friendship by one of the early Italian Humanists to another, might perhaps have been addressed to him: “*Melius erat non tantum sapere quantum sapis.*”* In my time he was a dim, remote figure, passing his days, as Rector of Lincoln, in Llama-like seclusion, and (as was currently believed) in the company of the ghosts of Scaliger and Casaubon and F. A. Wolf. He had sowed his intellectual wild oats among the Tractarians thirty years before. Indeed, he spent something like seven or eight of the best years of his youth, under the guidance of Newman, in grazing among the Fathers, whom (after his eyes had been opened) he characterized as “the degenerate and semi-barbarous Christian writers of the Fourth Century.” And now, in his emancipated isolation, he looked more in pity than in anger upon

* See Sir J. E. Sandys’s “Harvard Lectures” (Cambridge, 1905), p. 44, n.

what he regarded as the apostasy of Green. "A new *à priori* metaphysic," he writes, "was imported into Oxford by a staunch Liberal. It can only be accounted for by a certain puzzle-headedness on the part of the Professor, who was removed from the scene before he had time to see how eagerly the Tories began to carry off his honey to their hive."* (To avoid possible misapprehensions I ought perhaps to explain that, in the Llama dialect, "Liberal" means "Rationalist," and "Tory" means "High Churchman.")

I have not space to follow the Victorians into some of their other spheres of achievement and effort. In the domain of History, the names of Froude and Freeman became symbols and watchwords in the rather unreal battle on the issue whether it is possible for a great historian to be both accurate and readable. In point of fact, Froude was capable of an infinity of dryasdust research, and Freeman of not a little rugged and sometimes flashy rhetoric. The matter had been settled many centuries ago by Thucydides, and the combatants had another example before their eyes, or at least fresh in their memory. Macaulay—as we know from Sir G. Trevelyan's Life, the most brilliant of the Victorian biographies—thought no labour wasted in writing history,

* "Memoirs," by Mark Pattison (Macmillan, 1885), p. 167.

whether it was spent on verifying a fact, or perfecting a sentence.

On the Art of the Victorians—a difficult and much controverted topic—I will venture only a word. Turner can hardly be said to belong to them : but an Age which produced Millais and the Pre-Raphaelites and Watts, and in a later generation Frederick Walker and Cecil Lawson, can never (to put it at the lowest) be treated as a barren interlude in the annals of the English School of Painting.

I have left to the last a department in which the pre-eminence of the Victorians can hardly be challenged. Faraday, Joule, Kelvin, Lyell are four of the most illustrious names on the roll of English science. The researches of the first three in Chemistry and Physics have not only added enormously to the exactness and the amplitude of those sciences, but were the source and the condition of the vast developments in mechanics, and the application of electricity, which have transformed the face of the world and the habits of mankind. A catalogue of the great Victorian men of Science, and of their achievements, would include W. K. Clifford and F. M. Balfour : whose early deaths were declared by Huxley to be the greatest loss in his time to that department of Thought, not only in England but in the world.

If not actually the most important, certainly the most interesting, intellectual event in the Age was the appearance of Darwin's "Origin of Species" in 1859. There was nothing new in the conception of Evolution: it had a pedigree which stretched down from Heraclitus to Lamarck. It had even in certain of its aspects been popularized in Great Britain in a once famous book—the "Vestiges of Creation"—which between 1844, when it was first published, and 1853, ran through nine large editions.* But the great fence—the supposed immutability of species in the sphere of organic life—had still to be taken, and it is one of the singular so-called coincidences, of which there are many in the history of thought, that the road was being contemporaneously and independently explored in the first twenty years of the Victorian age by two Englishmen, Darwin and Wallace. Nothing can be finer or nobler than the relations which these two great men preserved to one another: it is one of the most honourable chapters in the annals of Science.

Darwin assumes three conditions without attempting to account for them—heredity, variation, overcrowding. He uses the phrase "Natural Selection" to describe the process by which the fortunate possessors of a new and

* See Merz, "History of European Thought in the Nineteenth Century" (Blackwood, 1912), Vol. II., p. 318.

aggressively useful variation were able to oust their old-fashioned, unvaried, conservative competitors.

The phrase which describes the conditions under which Natural Selection comes into play—the “struggle for existence”—is, I believe, due to Wallace;* and the phrase which describes the final result—the “survival of the fittest”—to Herbert Spencer. The last turned out, perhaps, to be the unluckiest formula of the three (although all have given rise to misunderstanding), because as Huxley, after thirty years’ experience, pointed out in his Romanes Lecture here† in 1894, the term “fittest” has, or is capable of having, a “moral flavour;” while the only “fitness” that is relevant to the argument is fitness having regard to the external conditions which for the time being prevail. I need hardly reassure those of you who are beginning to be anxious by saying that I am not going to touch even the fringe of the controversy as it presents itself to Biologists. I am not qualified to enter the outer court of the Temple of Science. I am interested in it to-day only in so far as it affected men and ideas in the Victorian Age.

There can be no question as to the extent and the depth of the interest which was aroused.

* This is a mistake: it was used and perhaps invented by Malthus.

† “Evolution and Ethics” (“Collected Essays,” Vol. IX., p. 80).

There had been nothing like it since the accession of the Queen. The Scientific Camp was divided : the veteran Owen resolutely hostile, Lyell not wholly convinced, and the younger spirits, the men of the future, headed by Huxley—one of the few men of whom it can be doubted whether he had a finer faculty for Science or for Letters —full of enthusiastic faith. By some of them Darwin was hailed as a second Newton ; and years afterwards, Mr. Romanes, the founder of this Lecture, and himself an accomplished biologist, went so far as to write : “If we may estimate the importance of an idea by the change of thought which it effects, this idéa of natural selection is unquestionably the most important idea that has ever been conceived by the mind of man.”*

There was another camp that was equally disturbed. The demonstration of the mutability of species, with its possible, perhaps its necessary, corollary, that the human race had been physically developed from some lower form of organism, seemed to many excellent people to be a death-blow, not only to Revelation, but to all the higher and more spiritual conceptions of man’s nature and functions. The lead in this sense was at once taken by a picturesque and interesting personage—the then Bishop of Oxford,

* “Darwin, and after Darwin,” Vol. I., p. 257 (quoted by Merz, l.c., p. 346, n.).

Samuel Wilberforce. This is the last place in the world where he needs a re-introduction. But one or two things may be said about him. He was in his day the foremost member of his own profession : by general consent the most effective preacher, by universal consent the greatest Bishop, in the Church of England. Through a curious malignity in the chapter of accidents, he just missed both Primacies, first that of York, and then that of Canterbury. Outside the ecclesiastical fold, he was in the House of Lords and on the platform one of the first orators in a time of great speakers : nor was he surpassed by any of his contemporaries in attractive social gifts. His more than Pauline capacity of being all things to all men gained him an undeserved reputation for time-serving, and even for insincerity. He had a whole-hearted belief in the Anglican position. In the field of action he was a wary and resourceful, and therefore a formidable, strategist.

Among other accomplishments the Bishop, who loved country life, had a good outside knowledge of Natural History, and after a little coaching from Owen, the *doyen* of British Biologists, he set to work to demolish Darwin in an article in the *Quarterly Review*. He thought to pursue his advantage at the meeting of the British Association which was held here in Oxford in 1860, where, however, in his own

chosen arena, Huxley, the young gladiator of Evolution—he was then only thirty-five—gave him a nasty fall.

Of another and a still more interesting incident in the campaign Oxford was again the scene. It was in the autumn of 1864. A meeting was to be held under the presidency of the Bishop in this very Theatre where we are assembled to-day. Its ostensible purpose was to advocate the claims of a Society for endowing Small Livings. Some weeks before the Bishop had invited the attendance of Mr. Disraeli—then leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons—in the character of an eminent layman of the Diocese. The appointed day (it was in the month of November) arrived: the Theatre was packed: the Bishop was in the Chair. Mr. Disraeli, attired (as we are told) in a black velvet jacket and a light-coloured waistcoat, with a billy-cock hat in his hands, sauntered in, as if he were paying a surprise visit to a Farmers' Ordinary. At the request of the Chairman, he got on his feet, and proceeded to deliver, with that superb nonchalance in which he was unrivalled among the orators of his day, one of his most carefully prepared and most effective speeches. Indeed among all his speeches, leaving aside his prolonged duel with Sir Robert Peel in the forties, I myself should select it as the one which best displays his characteristic

powers, and their equally characteristic limitations : irony, invective, boundless audacity of thought and phrase, the thrill or the shock when least expected, a brooding impression of something which is neither exactly sentiment nor exactly imagination but has a touch of both, a glittering rhetoric, constantly hovering over the thin boundary line which divides eloquence and bombast. First he pulverized, to the complete satisfaction of the supporters of better endowed Small Livings, the Broad Church party of the day and its leaders : Stanley, Jowett, Maurice, and the rest. Then came the magniloquent epigram, "Man, my Lord, is a being born to believe." And, finally, he proceeded to dispose of Darwin and his school. "What," he asked, "is the question now placed before Society with glib assurance the most astounding ? The question is this—Is man an Ape or an Angel ? My Lord, I am on the side of the Angels."* There was nothing more to be said. The meeting broke up, their faith reassured, their enthusiasm unrestrained. There had been no victory so complete since "Cox-combs vanquished Berkeley with a *grin*."

It is difficult now to believe, and it had become difficult long before the curtain dropped on the

* Buckle's "Life of Disraeli," Vol. IV., p. 370, sq. There is an interesting account of the scene by a non-academic eye-witness in Plowman's "In the Days of Victoria" (John Lane, 1918), pp. 144-6.

Victorian Age, that the conclusions of Darwin, whether warranted or not by the evidence, should have been supposed to imperil, or even to affect, men's conceptions of the real place of Man in the hierarchy of Nature. Within the technical domain of Biology, it is possible that Darwin raised more questions than he settled. There has been in that area ever since a succession of sects and schisms which almost recall the early centuries of the Christian Church ; though, happily or unhappily, the Biologists cannot summon a General Council to define the orthodox faith and to anathematize the heretics.

But in the general sphere of thought, Huxley, the purity of whose Darwinism no one could call in question, put the matter on its right footing in the Romanes Lecture to which I have already referred. Its real thesis is this : that (assuming the whole Darwinian interpretation of the cosmic chronicle to be true) "Ethical progress depends not on imitating the cosmic process but on defeating it." That is a doctrine which can neither be preached to nor practised by man, unless man is a thinking being, looking before and after, not the sport of blind forces, but capable of transcending and dominating them. For this purpose his physical pedigree—whatever it be—is of little moment ; whether his origin as animal was a special creation ; or the last stage in development, by this or that evolutionary pro-

cess, from the lowest forms of organic life ; or even (if that is to any one imaginable) the result of some fortuitous throw of the Dice of Chance. Somewhere and somehow, he has been endowed with something which is to be found nowhere else in the realm of nature ; the power of initiative and self-determination, of conceiving and pursuing ideals ; the capacity to build up an organized communal life, which is not merely cyclical or stereotyped (like that of the ants and the bees and the wolves), but contains within itself the potentiality and the seeds of progress—material, intellectual, spiritual. The last word in this as in some other vital matters is not with the philosophers, or even with the men of science, but with the poet, who has the gift of vision, and can teach us

*pleniū ac melius Chrysippo et Crantore.**

“What a piece of work is a man ! How noble in reason ! how infinite in faculty ! in form and moving how express and admirable ! in action how like an angel ! in apprehension how like a god ! the beauty of the world ! the paragon of animals !”†

I have tried to show you something of the extent and of the splendour of the contribution which the Victorians made to man’s common and ever-growing heritage. I can only hope (but with no very robust or confident faith) that

* Hor. 1 Epist. II., 4.

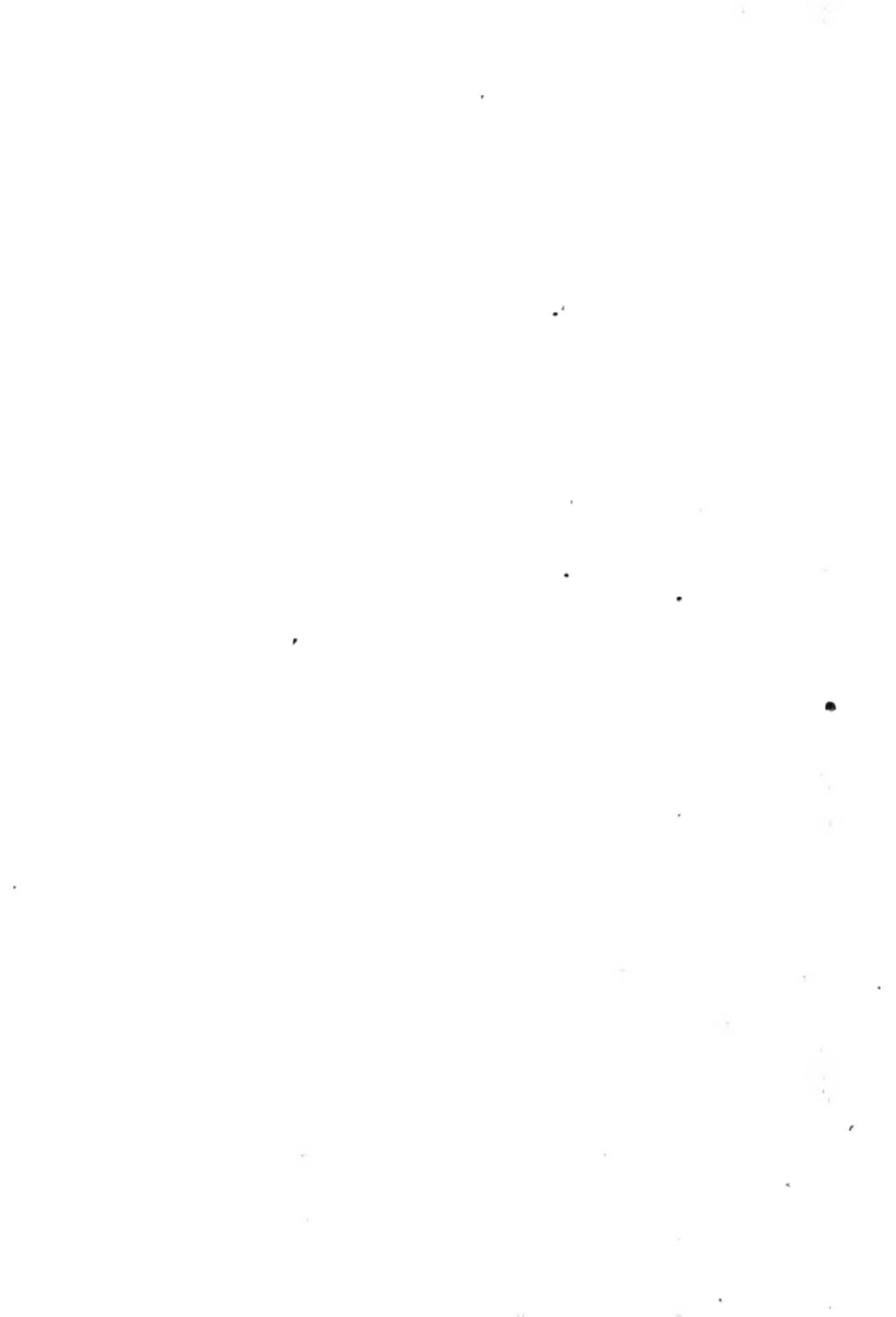
† Hamlet, II., 2.

some successor of mine, fifty years hence, in this chair, if he is minded to take a survey from the same outlook of post-Victorian times, may be able to say that their contribution was comparable in the things that permanently enrich and exalt mankind.

II

THE LAST CRUSADE

A CHAPTER IN PAPAL HISTORY
1450-1500



II

THE LAST CRUSADE

A CHAPTER IN PAPAL HISTORY
1450-1500

THE middle of the 15th century saw the reinstatement of the Papacy in full authority at Rome. For one hundred and fifty years it had been discredited and weakened by exile, schism and disputed successions ; by the unfilial attitude of the great potentates ; by the growing hostility of the local churches to the centralized despotism and covetousness of the Curia ; and by the attempts made at Constance and Basle to subject the Pope himself to the overriding authority of General Councils. The bark of St. Peter weathered all these storms, and had at last found what seemed a secure anchorage in its traditional haven. The Bull "*Eaeerabilis*" of Pius II. (1460) asserts the claims of the Papal Monarchy in their fullest and most unlimited sense, and denounces as an abominable heresy, unheard of in former times, any appeal to any future Council.

It was appropriate that the new era should be opened by the first of the Humanist Popes, *Nicolas V.* (1447-1455). A scholar, a great builder, an indefatigable collector, he surrounded himself with the most famous artists and men of learning of his day, and undertook, in a spirit of real magnificence, the task of making Rome the centre not only of Christendom but of Culture. He had friendly rivals in two of the most accomplished rulers of his own or any time; Cosimo de' Medici, and Alfonso I. of Naples. But he never relaxed his confident purpose that, as in religion, so in the external splendour of its buildings, and in its primacy in art and literature, Rome should be predominant over the whole Christian world. When Nicolas celebrated the Jubilee of 1450, and, two years later, the marriage and coronation of the Emperor Frederick III.,* the re-established Papacy, like the rising buildings of St. Peter's and the Vatican, with the frescoes of Fra Angelico and Benozzo Gozzoli, seemed to be reviving the glories of the Eternal City.

On the 29th May, 1453, Constantinople fell, and the Turk made good his foothold in Eastern Europe. It was an event that could easily have been foreseen, and if there had been anything like genuine unity in the Christian world, could as easily have been prevented. Incidentally

* Frederick III. was the last Emperor to be crowned in Rome.

it flooded Italy with a crowd of more or less erudite Greek refugees, who found a useful patron in their compatriot Cardinal Bessarion. It is a mistake to suppose that the influx of these Byzantine exiles first introduced into Italy a knowledge of the Greek classics in the original tongue. Neither Dante nor Petrarch knew any Greek to speak of, and Boccaccio very little; but for more than half a century there had been a steady importation of Greek MSS. from Constantinople, and at Florence, under Chrysoloras and his successors, the Greek language and literature had been systematically studied. "Most of the Greek Classics were brought to Italy by 1430, some twenty-three years before the Conquest of Constantinople by the Turks."*

But the occupation by Mohammedans of the Capital of Eastern Christendom awoke the dreamers and *dilettanti* in Rome, with the Pope at their head, to the realities of the time in which they lived. Nicolas himself turned in his last years from his buildings and his manuscripts to preach to a cold and divided Europe a New Crusade.

Calixtus III. (1455-1458) (the first Borgia; perhaps the most respectable member of a family which, in time, gave two Popes and eight Cardinals to the Church) was, at the date of his

* Professor A. C. Clark : "The Library," 4th series, Vol. II., No. 1 p. 377.

election, already a senile invalid ; and his short and inglorious tenure of the Papacy was largely preoccupied in providing for his relatives. But he did what was in his power to arouse Europe against the common enemy of Christendom. By the dispersal of many of the newly-acquired treasures of the Vatican Library, he raised and equipped a fleet. And when the victorious march of the Mohammedans was at last arrested at Belgrade, in April, 1456, it is right to remember that, while the main share of the glory belongs to John Hunyadi, the great Hungarian was well helped in his almost desperate task by two Churchmen, Carvajal, the Papal Legate, and the heroic Friar Capistrano. Within a few months disease carried off both Hunyadi and Capistrano : an inestimable loss to the Christian cause.

When Calixtus III. died in 1458, he was succeeded by a man of a totally different type—one of the characteristic figures of the Renaissance—a versatile rhetorician and diplomatist, who, after a youth and early manhood spent in the service of many masters, and enlivened by every kind of loose adventure, took Orders, reluctantly and late in life, as the best road to preferment, and had recently become a Cardinal. In the Conclave which followed the death of Calixtus, after much squalid intriguing between the French and Italian factions, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini

was in the end elected, and assumed the title by which he is known in history—*Pius II.* (1458–1464). He already posed as an old man (he was in fact only fifty-three), and was a victim, indeed almost a martyr, to the two chronic ailments, physical and moral, of the Popes of that era—gout and nepotism. But with all his shiftiness and worldliness, Pius II. was as strenuous as either of his predecessors in the prosecution of the New Crusade. He brought to the cause not only remarkable powers of speech (in which he had no contemporary rival), but inexhaustible energy of purpose and spirit. Friars carried the summons to the faithful in every part of Europe, and the Pope anathematized all, whether kings or subjects, who should try to hinder the Crusade.

But the results were insignificant. The days of crusading were over. No one had foreseen or stated the insuperable difficulties of such an enterprise more clearly than Aeneas himself. So far back as 1454, a year only after the fall of Constantinople, while Nicolas V. was still Pope, he had written : “ How will you persuade this multitude of rulers to take up arms ? Suppose they do, who is to be leader ? How is discipline to be maintained ? How is the Army to be fed ? Who can understand the different tongues ? Who will reconcile the English with the French, Genoa with Naples, the Germans with the

Bohemians and Hungarians ?* If you lead a small army against the Turks you will be defeated : if you lead a large one there will be confusion."†

All this was as true and as apposite in 1464 as it was ten years before ; indeed (as a glance at the political conditions, internal and external, of England, France, Germany, Bohemia, and Italy itself, is sufficient to show), anything like a general and effective concentration of the Christian States against the Turk was, from first to last, the idlest of dreams.

Pius II., decrepit and moribund, nevertheless resolved himself to take a personal part in the Holy War. In June, 1464, he took the Cross in St. Peter's, and was carried thence to Ancona, where the rabble of so-called Crusaders were waiting in vain for the Venetian transports. When the ships at last appeared (after the bulk of the army had dispersed) the Pope was already dying (August, 1464). It is characteristic of the whole business that the Doge, who came with his Fleet, expressed the opinion that his arrival was a disappointment to the Pope, who had hoped to get rid of the expedition by throwing the blame on Venice.

Under the next Pontificate, that of *Paul II.*

* He might have added to this troublesome list the Venetians, who insured themselves by making a commercial treaty with the Turks.

† Gibbon, Ch. Ixviii. ; Creighton, Vol. III., p. 150.

(1464–1471), little was heard of the Crusade, and nothing was done to set it on foot. Paul, who tried to take up the Humanist tradition of Nicolas V., was primarily a busy connoisseur ; his hand was heavy upon the tiresome literary pedants of his time ;* but he was an impotent ruler of the Church.

At this point it may not be irrelevant to digress for a moment from the course of the narrative. The 15th century in Italy (as elsewhere in Europe) was singularly barren in the domain of creative Literature. After the death of Petrarch (1374) she produced not a single great original writer, until we come to Ariosto, Machiavelli and Guicciardini, whose work belongs mainly to the first quarter of the 16th century. But it is a commonplace of the historians, and one of the paradoxes of history, that in that same era and country we find an unexampled efflorescence of the finest and most spiritualized Art, side by side with perhaps the lowest moral standard ever reached in Christian times, both of personal and of public life.

The successor of Paul II. was *Sixtus IV.* (1471–1484), the first Rovere ; a family which, if it could not quite rival the Borgias in sheer wickedness, almost outstripped them in successful cupidity and rapacity : it contributed, in

* The development at this time of the new art of printing struck a salutary blow at the perverted virtuosity of the early Humanists.

its various branches, to the Church two Popes, and no less than twelve Cardinals. Sixtus himself is a curious illustration—such as only the Italian Renaissance could supply—of the sinister volcanic fires which might lie hidden for years in the breast of a learned and devout Franciscan friar. He coquettled in a half-hearted way with the Crusade; but his energies and ambitions were mainly absorbed in enriching his worthless kindred, and in attempting, by every kind of violence and chicanery, to secure for the Papal State the political hegemony of Italy.

Perhaps his masterpiece was the Pazzi Conspiracy, engineered in Rome, if not at the initiative, certainly with the connivance, of the Pope, whose political schemes were blocked by the power of the Medici at Florence. The two brothers, Lorenzo and Giuliano, were to be got rid of at all costs. In the end (the story is one of the most famous, or infamous, in the history of the Renaissance) they were inveigled into attending High Mass in the Duomo at Florence on Sunday the 26th April, 1478. At the moment when the Host was being elevated by the celebrant, Cardinal Raffaele Riario, a boy of not more than seventeen, a bastard son of a bastard son of the Pope, the assassins (of whom two were priests) fell upon the Medici brothers with their daggers. Giuliano was stabbed to death; Lorenzo was wounded, but escaped from the

church alive. Florence took summary vengeance upon the conspirators ; one of the ringleaders, Salviati, Archbishop of Pisa, was hanged forthwith, in his episcopal robes, from a window of the Palazzo Vecchio ; and, in requital, the city was promptly laid under an Interdict by the Pope.

It is one of the many ironies in the character and career of Sixtus IV. that he retained to the last his interest in theology, and his devotion to the Franciscan Order. In particular, he never wavered in his adhesion to the specially Franciscan doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, to whom he dedicated two great churches in Rome, though, in the end, he agreed to allow belief in the doctrine to be an open question in the Church : in which situation it remained for the best part of four centuries.

Sixtus IV. is principally known to the artists and tourists of the modern world as the creator of the Sistine Chapel, adorned under his supervision by the genius of Perugino and Botticelli, and, later, in the Pontificate of his nephew Julius II., by that of Michelangelo. It is perhaps not surprising that, to his contemporaries, he did not seem to have been called by Providence to rekindle the torch which, in the days of the great Crusades, had been lighted by prophets like St. Bernard, and carried by paladins like St. Louis.

The conqueror of Constantinople, Mohammed II., died in 1481,* and war at once broke out between his two incapable sons, Bajazet and Djem. Djem took refuge with the Knights of Rhodes ; was bought from them, at the price of a Cardinal's hat for the Grand Master, by the successor of Sixtus, *Innocent VIII.* (1484–1492) (otherwise a rather scandalous nonentity) ; and was taken to Rome, where he lived in more or less gilded captivity, and played for years the part of a much-coveted pawn on the chess-board of Christian diplomacy.

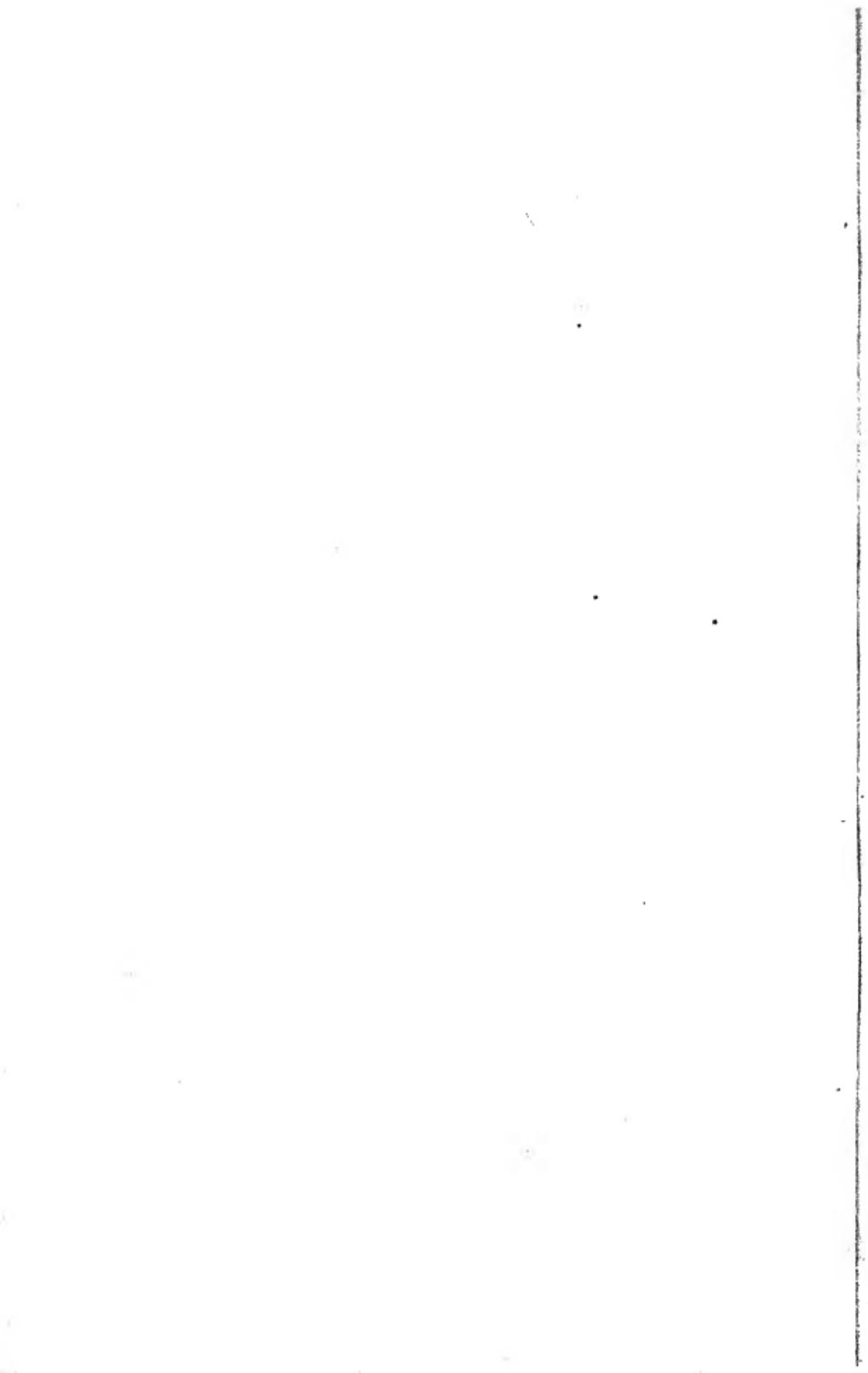
This episode in history has a fitting anti-climax. On Ascension Day, 1492, Innocent VIII.—who was nearing his own end—solemnly received at the Porta del Popolo, and bore in procession to the Vatican, a priceless present, which had been sent to him by the Sultan Bajazet : the Head of the Holy Lance, which pierced the Saviour on the Cross. While the dying Pope muttered his benediction to the populace, the Sacred Relic was held aloft by Cardinal Borgia, who was to buy his way a few weeks later to the Chair of St. Peter, and to make the name of Alexander VI. the most infamous in the annals of the Papacy. Alexander's rela-

* In 1480 the famous portrait of Mohammed II., now in the National Gallery under the Layard bequest, was painted at Constantinople by Gentile Bellini, on a commission from the Government of Venice. In the same year, probably with the connivance of the Venetians, the Turks were able to land for the first time in South Italy, at Otranto.

tions with Bajazet soon became friendly and even intimate. In 1494 they struck a bargain, by which, in return for the assassination of his brother Djem, the Commander of the Faithful agreed to hand over to the Vicar of Christ the Seamless Coat, for which the soldiers cast lots on Calvary.

Twenty years later, in 1517, when the fading vision of a New Crusade still hovered fitfully over the marshes of European diplomacy, we find our own King Henry VIII. remarking sagaciously to the Venetian Ambassador in London : " You are wise, and of your wisdom can understand that no general expedition against the Turk will ever be undertaken, so long as such treachery prevails among the Christian Powers that their sole thought is to destroy one another."* And so it came to pass that the Crescent continued for centuries to fly over the Dome of St. Sophia.

* Creighton, Vol. V., p. 276.



III

SOME POPULAR FRENZIES IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY



III

SOME POPULAR FRENZIES IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY*

“Tumultuositas vulgi insaniae proxima.”

ALCUIN.—Capitulare admonitionis ad Carolum.—A.D.800.

THE eighteenth century—our “excellent and indispensable eighteenth century,” as Matthew Arnold calls it, with a touch of Victorian condescension—is one of the eras in which it would have been most comfortable and restful to have lived in England. It was marked (it is true) in its latter half by two of the greatest popular uprisings in history. The one was the revolt of the American Colonies, which, after sputtering and flickering for years, and more than once seeming likely to go out altogether, led, with the aid of France and Spain, to American independence. The other was the French Revolution, a conflagration which swept everything before it, and left behind in Continental Europe, not only a new map, but many more enduring

* An abbreviated form of this Paper was delivered as a Lecture at the Working Men's College, January 18th, 1923.

legacies ; amongst them, the supersession of local usages and feudal survivals by rational Codes, in their essence uniform, founded upon the Civil Law.

We here in England, though we were one of the two chief actors in the first of these dramatic struggles, and, in its later stages (after the eighteenth century had come to an end) found ourselves compelled to play a leading part in the second, were free at home from any serious political upheaval. Our ancestors disposed of the two Stuart Pretenders, on the whole, with a minimum of noise and fuss ; and, while the elder Pitt was founding our Empire over the seas, they made practically no change in the form, and very little in the working, of the Constitution. Few people now realize that in 1763 England reached an international eminence, which she has never before or since attained. Let me cite a few words from Sir George Trevelyan's great historical work :

" When the Seven Years' War came to a termination, the influence of England throughout the Continent was immense : her power on the high seas was undisputed. . . . She had drawn the sword so often, and wielded it so efficaciously, on behalf of others, that the Governments which she had protected and rescued (in Europe) seldom grudged her the provinces and colonies which she had founded or appropriated in distant

quarters of the Globe. . . . Feared and hated by some nations, esteemed and even beloved by others, she was everywhere respected, admired, and imitated."² He quotes the lines from *Antony and Cleopatra*:

"I shall do well :
The people love me, and the sea is mine :
My powers are crescent, and my auguring hope
Says it will come to the full."*

Chatham had advocated, and both the younger Pitt and Fox from time to time voted for, mild measures of Parliamentary Reform; but they were always in a minority. Until the time when George III. broke loose, and made himself his own Chief Minister, which was his position during practically the whole of Lord North's ill-starred and infatuated government, politics were a struggle between two or three groups of great families for the sweets and spoils of office, while the bulk of the nation, of whom only a small minority had votes, looked on like a modern crowd at a football match. There were two great men, and only two, who succeeded in dominating both the Crown and the aristocracy, and were, not only in name but in reality, Prime Ministers—Walpole and the younger Pitt; and it is notable that their terms of office (in both cases) exceed in duration those of any of their

* "The American Revolution," Part III., p. 422.

successors down to the present day. Except for occasional fits of resentment and disgust, when some unusually glaring scandal leapt to light, and showed that one or another of the long succession of weak Administrations had transcended the normal standard of corruption or incompetence, the evidence tends to prove that, in the long run, the people were fairly content to be governed as they were. In the worst and most costly of the follies of the reign of George III.—the quarrel with the American Colonies—popular opinion (supported by Dr. Johnson and John Wesley) seems, almost to the last, to have been on the side of the King.

In fact, we have come to associate the eighteenth century here in England, not only in its politics, but in its literature, its religion, and its art, with the ideas of moderation, sobriety, and measure. As Professor Ker says, “A great intellectual revolution was accomplished with no insurrection, no manifestoes, no conceit. . . . The Library of Trinity College, Cambridge, which is the work of Wren; the Library designed in the tradition of Wren for his own College of All Souls; these inventions and many others, might impress upon the minds of literary persons something of the true meaning of that age. They might see there for themselves how far different is restraint from restriction, and moderation from meanness; what thrilling

life there may be in simple harmonies of space.”*

Its poets—Pope, Addison and the rest—rarely attempt to leave the ground. The “Essay on Man” has been justly described as “versified prose.” “It is the poetry,” says Matthew Arnold, speaking of Dryden and Pope, “of the builders of an age of prose and reason.”

The so-called Augustan age may be said to have expired with the deaths of Pope and Swift in 1744–5. It was immediately succeeded by an era of different but equally brilliant productivity. The literary output of the last twenty years of the reign of George II. is amazing both in volume and in quality. Between 1740 and 1760 there were published all the masterpieces of Fielding and Richardson; Sterne’s “Tristram Shandy”; Johnson’s “Vanity of Human Wishes,” “Rasselas” and Dictionary; Gray’s Elegy and Odes; and within the next few years the “Sentimental Journey,” and Goldsmith’s “Traveller” and “Vicar of Wakefield.” This was a magnificent crop, perhaps unsurpassed ever since in any two successive decades, even in Victorian days.

At the same time (between 1742 and 1746) Edward Young produced his “Night Thoughts”—a book which is now little read, but which

* W. P. Ker.: “The Eighteenth Century.” English Association, Pamphlet No. 85, 1916. His recent and much lamented death is an irreparable loss to literature and scholarship.

in its day convulsed the intellectual world, and was translated into almost every European language. It was the pioneer of what the French called *le genre sombre*; of which Hervey's "Meditations among the Tombs" was another specimen. On the Continent, as Mr. Mackail tells us, "Richardson, Young, and Ossian were the great Trinity of models."*

The faculty of observation, the arts both of invention and of apt and felicitous expression, have rarely been more fruitfully employed than by the group of deft and accomplished writers who illuminated the closing years of George II. They developed, some critics would say they brought to perfection, the English Novel. They inaugurated (amongst other things) the cultus of what was called "Sensibility"† which persisted for more than the life-time of a generation, until it received its death-blow from Jane Austen. "Gusto," says Professor Ker, "the term of art which was so frequent in that century, and such a favourite with Hazlitt afterwards, is a word that sums up much of the spirit of the age. What is meant by *gusto* is the hilarity of spirit of the artist as he works."‡ But they made no claim to the creative imagination of the great Elizabethans; they could not reproduce the

* Mackail: Young's "Night Thoughts," Transactions R.S.L., Vol. XXXVI.

† See Mackail, *op. cit.*

‡ Ker, *op. cit.*

soaring flights and majestic cadences of Milton ; they did not anticipate the spacious and crowded canvases of Scott ; still less, the re-creation of English poetry by masters so gifted and diverse as Wordsworth and Keats. The eighteenth century in England was not, in literature or in any other department, an Age of Romance.

Its prevailing attitude in another great domain—that of Religion—was in keeping. It is difficult to imagine in these days a leading oracle of the Church using such language as this of the Communion :

“ Nor must I fail to remind you of that highly useful, and by no means terrible or difficult, duty of receiving the Lord’s Supper.”

These words are to be found in the farewell sermon delivered to the congregation of St. James’s, Piccadilly, in 1750, by the most popular preacher of the day ; afterwards, without doubt, the most capable of the Georgian Primates—Archbishop Secker.*

Nothing illustrates better the temper of the Anglican Church in the eighteenth century than the manner in which its rulers handled the very difficult situation which was created by Whitefield and Wesley. Archbishop Herring (a now forgotten name), who was Primate from 1747 to 1757, was (as Horace Walpole says) a “ harmless, amiable man ; ” “ inclined to much moderation ; ”

* See “The Primates of the Four Georges,” by A. W. Rowden, 1916.

what we should now call a Broad Churchman, and in favour of the comprehension of the Dissenters. But what was nicknamed "Enthusiasm" seemed to him to be outside the pale of rational Christianity. And the new Methodist movement, with its strange and often hysterical accompaniments, he regarded as "Enthusiasm" run mad. "John Wesley," he wrote, shortly before his death, "with good parts and learning, is a most dark and sinister creature. His pictures may frighten weak people, that at the same time are wicked, but I fear he will make few converts except for a day." He adds a highly sagacious remark: "I have read his serious thoughts on the earthquake at Lisbon,* but for my own part I think the rising and setting of the sun is a more durable argument for religion than all the extraordinary convulsions of nature put together."

"For myself" (he concludes) "I own I have no constitution for these frights and fervours. . . . The subjects of the Methodist preaching are excellent in the hands of wise men (*not Enthusiasts*). Religion for the practice of the world must be plain and intelligible to the lowest understanding." A few years later, Archbishop Secker—a far abler man—allowed a golden opportunity for an Eirenicon with the Methodists

* Which troubled the faith of the boy Goethe, and even undermined the optimistic Deism of Voltaire.

to slip. In 1760 the unordained Wesleyan preachers, boycotted by the Established Church, began to take out licences as Dissenters and to administer the Sacraments. It was then that Charles Wesley wrote to his brother John: "We are come to the Rubicon."

The whole incident, pregnant as it was with unforeseen and momentous consequences, throws a flood of light upon the manner in which the Church of those days interpreted the Apostolic injunction—so congenial to prevailing English standards in the eighteenth century—"Let your moderation be known to all men."

It may, perhaps, be necessary to add this qualification: the "moderation" of the eighteenth century is conspicuously absent from its controversial methods, especially in the domain of theology. After the schism between the Calvinistic and Arminian Methodists, Toplady (the author of "*Rock of Ages*") spoke of John Wesley as "a low and puny tadpole in divinity," actuated by "Satanic shamelessness and Satanic guilt;" and another of the Calvinist leaders, Rowland Hill, a gifted preacher, described him as a "designing wolf . . . as unprincipled as a rook, and as silly as a jackdaw."* Wesley, on the whole, comported himself in controversy with comparative dignity and restraint, and when

* See Lecky: "*England in the Eighteenth Century*," Vol. III., p. 98.

recalling, after Bishop Warburton's death, some foul scurrilities with which he had been assailed by that famous ecclesiastical bargee, contented himself with the dry remark : " I let Bishop Warburton alone. He is gone to rest ! I well hope, in Abraham's bosom."

But now and again the crust of Convention was rudely disturbed by the sudden emergence of incalculable and even catastrophic forces.

By far the most remarkable figure, with the exception of Berkeley, in the Anglican Communion in the eighteenth century was Joseph Butler, who had been in his youth a fellow-pupil with Secker, his life-long friend, in the Dissenting Academy of Samuel Jones. His writings, which were edited not many years ago with loving and reverential care by no less a person than Mr. Gladstone, were, almost up to my time at Oxford, considered hardly less essential to the study of philosophy than those of Plato and Aristotle. He became Bishop of Bristol, and strolling one evening in his garden with his Chaplain, Josiah Tucker, he broke out into this singular monologue :

" Why might not whole communities . . . be seized with fits of insanity as well as individuals ? Nothing but this principle, that they are liable to insanity, can account for the major part of those transactions of which we read in history."

It may be worth while to test the Bishop's speculation by one or two episodes in the annals

of the prosaic and serene England of the eighteenth century : a country, as we have seen, disinclined to extremes, distrustful of "enthusiasm," content in the main with the fabric and the working of its lop-sided constitution ; where, it may be added—at any rate, during the long reign of George II.—it is the opinion of competent authorities, such as Hallam and Malthus, that what is now called the working class enjoyed a better average standard of comfort than has fallen to their lot either before or since.

The first illustration may be drawn from the Sacheverell Case in the reign of Queen Anne. The incident is described briefly, but with picturesqueness and point, in Lord Morley's Monograph on Walpole :*

"Sacheverell was a clergyman of respectable family, a fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and rector of St. Saviour's Church, Southwark. He possessed no marked ability, but he had some of the gifts of the pulpit, and was a popular city preacher on the Tory side. . . . His historic discourse at St. Paul's on November 5th, 1709, is vehement, heated, and uncompromising, and it contains much strong language about dissenters, and the false brethren who connived at dissent ; but it hardly deserves to be dismissed as absurd and scurrilous.† It was a bold

* "Walpole," by John Morley, pp. 14-17.

† Sacheverell's text was : "In perils among false brethren." II. Cor. xi., 26.

declaration, without qualification or exception, of the general principle of passive obedience and non-resistance to government, with practical innuendoes that pointed unmistakably against the whole revolution settlement. The Lord Mayor, who was among the congregation at St. Paul's, and who was a Tory member of Parliament, thanked the preacher for his sermon, took him home to dinner, urged him to publish it, and accepted the dedication. Forty thousand copies found buyers.

"The Government felt that this was an attack on the existing order that could not be passed over. Marlborough, Somers, and Walpole inclined to the view that it might be left to an ordinary prosecution at law. Godolphin, however, stung by a nickname (*Volpone*) cast upon him by Sacheverell, supported the violent and impetuous Sunderland in urging impeachment; and this course was resolved upon. As events turned out, the decision was disastrous to the Government and to the Whig party. . . .

"The commotion itself has been so often described that it is unnecessary to tell over again here how Sacheverell became the hero of the hour; how each day during the three weeks of his trial he was attended by an immense crowd of zealous admirers rending the air with their huzzas, and struggling to kiss his hand as he went from his lodgings in the Temple along the

Strand to Westminster Hall: how his effigies were sold in every street; how his health was drunk before the Queen's, and in the same glass with that of the Church; how the London mob attacked meeting-houses, burned the pews and furniture, and maltreated all who would not shout as they did; and how they pressed round the Queen herself in her sedan chair at the door of Westminster Hall, crying, ‘God bless your Majesty and the Church: we hope your Majesty is for Dr. Sacheverell.’ He was as popular in the provinces as in the capital; his journey through the midlands to a living in Shropshire was like a royal progress; and the booksellers sold more copies of his trial than of anything since Dryden’s ‘Absalom and Achitophel.’ The final sentence was lenient enough to satisfy even the half-contemptuous indulgence of modern days. When the trial was over, the Lords decreed that he should be suspended from preaching for three years, and that his sermon should be publicly burnt, along with some other obnoxious matters and things, in the presence of the Lord Mayor and the Sheriffs of London.”

A dissolution of Parliament soon followed, and the agitation shattered the Whig supremacy. Lord Morley thus sums up what he calls “the lesson of the Sacheverell explosion :”*

“ That extraordinary outbreak led to the Tory

* *Ib.*, p. 186.

Government of the last four years of Queen Anne, and . . . nothing short of the greatest miracle in our history prevented that Government ending either in a legitimist restoration or a Civil War."

This was the consequence of one sermon in St. Paul's. One may doubt whether even the formidable dialectics of the accomplished Dean who now presides over the Chapter could, in a single deliverance from the same pulpit, compass such results.

But this was only the first in a series of epidemics which, without any kind of premonition, ravaged the sedate England of the eighteenth century. Lack of time forbids me to dwell on the South Sea Bubble; on the ridiculous and ignorant, but dangerous, outburst of extravagant violence which destroyed Walpole's well-conceived scheme for an Excise in 1733; on the Porteous affair in Scotland, which has been made unforgettable by the genius of Sir Walter Scott; or on the trag-i-comedy of Jenkins's Ear which led to the Spanish War, the one fatal mistake in Walpole's career; of which Carlyle truly says: "Had it not been for Jenkins's Ear, blazing out in the dark English brain, Walpole might have lasted still a long while."

I will give two further instances, both drawn from this same century, which go a long way to give point and proof to Bishop Butler's hypothesis.

The first is the case of John Wilkes, a demagogue *malgré lui*, who in the height of a popularity more dazzling than has perhaps ever been enjoyed by any other Englishman, declared with perfect sincerity that, whatever had been the disposition and passions of other people, he himself had never been a *Wilkite*.

Full details of this amazing episode are to be found in Sir G. Trevelyan's "Early Years of Charles James Fox," and in the third volume of Lecky's admirable "History of England in the Eighteenth Century." They can be summarized in a few lines.

Wilkes was a man of extreme physical ugliness, a notorious profligate and blasphemer, without any gift of popular oratory, but with a ready wit and much social charm; an ambitious and unscrupulous adventurer. In time he climbed his way into the House of Commons, where he made no impression. In 1762 he founded the *North Briton* newspaper, in which he carried on a scurrilous campaign against Lord Bute and the Scotch. (When he was afterwards sent to the Tower he asked for a room in which no Scotchman had been lodged, if in the Tower such a room could be found.) No steps were taken against him until the publication of the famous No. 45 (after Grenville had succeeded Bute), which contained a violent attack upon the language used in the recently delivered King's

Speech (April, 1763). The Government then resorted to what was afterwards decided to be the illegal method of a "general warrant," and Wilkes was imprisoned in the Tower; a proceeding which was also held to be illegal, on the ground of Parliamentary privilege, by the unanimous judgment of the Court of Common Pleas. Wilkes was accordingly released, and reprinted all the numbers of the *North Briton*, with a commentary in which he demonstrated without any difficulty the constitutional doctrine that the King's Speech is to be regarded as the language, not of the Sovereign, but of his Ministers. The House of Commons thereupon voted No. 45 to be a "seditious libel," and the House of Lords followed suit by declaring Wilkes's unpublished "Essay on Woman" to be an "obscene libel," and demanding the prosecution of the author.

Wilkes became at once a popular hero; he received the freedom of the Cities of London and Dublin and other great corporations; and his portrait, painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, was placed in the Guildhall, inscribed with the title of the "jealous assertor of English Liberty by law." The Commons retorted by passing a perfectly illegal resolution which purported to deprive him in the pending proceedings of the privilege of Parliament. Wilkes fled to Paris, and in January, 1764, he was expelled from the

House of Commons, and outlawed for non-appearance by the Court of King's Bench. Two years later he returned to London, and announced himself as a candidate for the City. He was defeated there, but at once stood for Middlesex and was returned at the head of the poll. He then appeared before the King's Bench and was sentenced to twenty-two months' imprisonment and a fine of £1,000.

"While these events were taking place," writes Mr. Lecky,* "the riotous spirit which had for some years been growing stronger and stronger in England increased almost to the point of revolution.

"At the opening of the Middlesex election, the mob at break of day took possession of every avenue and turnpike leading to the place of voting, and would suffer no one to pass who did not wear a blue cockade with the name of Wilkes and No. 45; and during the two days of the election the whole town was almost at their mercy. The windows of the Mansion House were demolished. The houses of Lord Bute, Lord Egmont, the Duke of Northumberland, and the Duchess of Hamilton were attacked. The City Marshal and many of the principal opponents of Wilkes were assaulted as they drove through Hyde Park. The coach-glasses of all who refused to huzza for 'Wilkes and Liberty' were broken,

* Vol. III., p. 319, sq.

and even ladies were taken out of their chairs and compelled to join in the popular cry. The Austrian Ambassador, one of the most stately and ceremonious of men, was dragged from his coach and '45' chalked on the soles of his shoes. The same popular number was inscribed on every carriage that drove through the streets, and on every door along the roads far beyond the precincts of the City. Franklin noticed that there was hardly a house within fifteen miles of London unmarked, and the inscription might be seen from time to time the whole way from London to Winchester.*

"‘For two nights,’ wrote the same accurate observer, ‘London was illuminated at the command of the mob. . . . The second night exceeded anything of the kind ever seen here on the greatest occasions of rejoicing, as even the small cross streets, lanes, courts, and other out-of-the-way places, were all in a blaze with lights, and the principal streets all night long, as the mobs went round again after two o’clock and obliged people who had extinguished their candles to light them again. Those who refused had all their windows destroyed.’ When Wilkes appeared at the King’s Bench to receive judgment as an outlaw, the whole neighbourhood of the

* Alexander Cruden, the more than half-mad author of the “Concordance,” used to go out equipped with a large wet sponge, and efface the obnoxious number.

Court was thronged by his partisans ; and when the Court, refusing to accept bail, committed him to prison, he was rescued on Westminster Bridge ; the horses were taken off the carriage in which he was conveyed ; he was dragged in triumph by the crowd through the Strand and through Fleet Street ; and it was with much difficulty that he at last succeeded in escaping from his admirers and surrendering to the authorities.

"The City Constables were so few that in the course of the election London was almost unprotected, nearly the whole available force being collected at Brentford. It was doubtful whether even the soldiers could be fully trusted. Some regimental drummers were said to have beaten their drums for Wilkes. . . . Franklin no doubt exaggerated when he said that if Wilkes had possessed a good character and the King a bad one, Wilkes would have driven George III. from the throne ; but it is at least certain that the state of England was very alarming."

At the General Election of 1768 Wilkes was again returned for Middlesex, and, on a casual vacancy soon afterwards in the representation of the same County, Serjeant Glynn, who had espoused his cause, was elected as his colleague despite all the efforts of the Court and Ministry. The new House of Commons, in defiance of the protests of George Grenville, again voted the

expulsion of Wilkes, who was unanimously re-elected by his constituents; whereupon the House declared him incapable of sitting in Parliament, and after a further election, in which Wilkes beat his opponent, Colonel Luttrell, by nearly four to one, the Commons reached the culminating point of lawlessness, by voting that Luttrell had been duly elected.

This was Wilkes's high-water mark. On his release from prison in April, 1776, London was illuminated, and "the word 'Liberty' in letters three feet high blazoned on the Mansion House."* He was elected successively Alderman, Sheriff and Lord Mayor. "A sum of about £20,000 was raised by subscriptions to pay his debts and provide him with a competence, and gifts, legacies and testimonials poured in upon him from many quarters." There followed one of the greatest dialectical duels in Parliamentary history between Mansfield and Chatham, in which Chatham demolished once and for all the doctrine of passive obedience—whether it was invoked on behalf of the House of Commons or on behalf of the Crown—in the memorable words :

"What is this mysterious power, undefined by law, unknown to the subject, which we must not approach without awe, or speak of without reverence, which no man must question, but all men must obey?"

* "Lecky," p. 384.

The subsequent career of Wilkes, who became Chamberlain of the City, has little interest for the historian. The illegal resolutions of the House of Commons were expunged in 1782 from its journals, upon which, if they had remained, they would have left an indelible stain.

In the case of Wilkes, who was the accidental hero of a cause in which he himself had at best a lukewarm belief, the popular frenzy, however wild and exaggerated in its manifestations, had not only a respectable origin, but a real justification. The clay-footed idol, at whose altar so much incense was burned, had been the victim of vindictive persecution and lawless tyranny. Two great issues of principle were from first to last at stake: the freedom of the individual citizen from the arbitrary action of the Executive; and the unfettered right of the electorate to choose any representative, not disqualified by law, as their member in the House of Commons.

There was not only no such justification, but there was no excuse, for another outburst of delirium, which I will take as my final illustration.

As late as 1778 the English Roman Catholics were still nominally subject to a Penal Code, built up in less enlightened days, which, if it had become really operative, would have made them outlaws in their native country, incapable

of inheriting or purchasing land, of keeping schools, or of celebrating the rites and sacraments of their Church. These barbarous laws, abhorrent to the whole intellectual and spiritual tendency of the age, were for the most part in practical desuetude ; but they could always be, as they were from time to time, put in force by private malice, or by the greed of a common informer. In the year which I have just named the bulk of them were repealed, at the instance of one of the wisest and most public-spirited statesmen of the age, Sir George Savile ; with the unanimous assent of both Houses of Parliament.*

A so-called Protestant agitation was at once set on foot in Scotland ; houses and shops of Catholics and their supposed sympathizers were wrecked and plundered ; the movement spread rapidly to England, and became formidable, when it was taken up by a young member of Parliament, the cadet of a ducal family, Lord George Gordon. He was a totally different type of demagogue from Wilkes—ignorant and uncultured, eccentric to the verge of insanity, but, after his fashion, an honest fanatic. At the end of his life, some years later, he became a convert to Judaism. At his instance, a procession of many thousands of men was organized in the early days of June, 1780, to march to

* Full particulars are to be found in Lecky, Vol. IV., ch. 12.

Westminster, and demand the repeal of the Relief Act. The demonstrators wore, like those of Wilkes, a blue Cockade; their war cry was "No Popery;" and both the symbol and the catch-word rapidly attained a wide-spread and perilous popularity. The promoters incited their followers to every form of violence and outrage. Lord Mansfield, the Chief Justice, who was supposed to favour the Catholics, was recognized in the streets and all but torn to pieces. His house in Bloomsbury Square, with its unique library, was sacked and destroyed. Both Houses of Parliament were besieged and their members kept for hours in durance. The chapels of the Ministers of Roman Catholic foreign states were desecrated and plundered. The new prison at Newgate, with three others, was burnt to the ground and the prisoners let loose; and after three days, a contemporary writer records that "the Metropolis of England is possessed by an enraged, furious and rancorous enemy. Their outrages are beyond description and meet with no resistance." The shops were shut: "No Popery" was chalked on the shutters. The whole City was in imminent danger of destruction. There was no effective police: the magistrates and citizens were completely intimidated.* It was only through the tardy

* With one notable exception: that of Mr. Alderman Wilkes, who distinguished himself by his intrepidity and severity in dealing with the rioters.

intervention of the soldiers, and at a large loss of life, that the orgy of pillage and incendiaryism was at last arrested. Similar disturbances took place in provincial towns, such as Hull, Bristol and Bath. "The month of June, 1780," writes the historian Gibbon, "will ever be marked by a dark and diabolical fanaticism which I had supposed to be extinct."

The most extraordinary thing about this—the last in England of the great eighteenth century epidemics—is that the "No Popery" cry continued to be popular in the country. At the General Election in September, 1780, it cost Burke, a strenuous advocate of the Catholics, his seat in Bristol, and it put the tottering and indeed moribund Government of Lord North once more upon its legs.

I draw no moral. But these things, like everything in history, are written for our instruction; and there is no study which is better fitted to equip the judgment, and to enlarge the imagination, in the growingly complex problems which overcloud the future of the world.

IV

DR. JOHNSON AND FANNY BURNEY



IV

DR. JOHNSON AND FANNY BURNEY*

To all true Johnsonians, and they are as many now and as devoted as they ever were, Boswell's Text is and will remain the authentic and imperishable record of his hero's life and conversation. The old controversies about the author's qualifications, moral and intellectual, for his task are as obsolete as Macaulay's once famous lampoon upon Croker's edition. Boswell is Boswell, prince among biographers, and the lively oracle of the Johnsonian faith. But it has sometimes seemed to me that it might be an interesting speculation to assume that Boswell had never written or published anything about the Doctor; or that his Life was as irrecoverably lost as are (to all appearance) the missing books of Livy, or the Dialogues of Aristotle, which, according to ancient authorities, prove him to have been the master of an alluring and even fascinating style.

What should we have known of Johnson if we had had to depend (in Burke's contemptuous

* Address to the Johnson Club, 13th December, 1922.

phrase, used before Boswell's book saw the light of day) upon the " maggots that crawled out of that great body ? " Should we have had to build up a legendary figure ? Or would there have been enough authentic and living material to reconstruct the actual Johnson, in all essentials as we know him now : a unique, dominating, perverse, and lovable personality ?

As a modest contribution to the task, I am going in this paper to endeavour to present Johnson to you as he appeared to the eyes, and was depicted by the pen, of one of the shrewdest of contemporary observers, Fanny Burney.

Her father, Dr. Charles Burney, the author of the History of Music, was a man of many accomplishments and great social gifts, a familiar and welcome figure in literary and artistic circles ; he was an old friend of Dr. Johnson, who said of him : " I love Burney ; my heart goes out to meet him." Fanny, as a girl (she was born in 1752), had gazed from a reverential distance at the Great Man when he paid a visit to her father's house.

Her real acquaintance with him did not begin till 1778, when Johnson was verging on seventy, half-blind and hard of hearing, and all his eccentricities of gait, gesture, and manner had reached their fullest development. Their friendship lasted for six years, until Johnson's death in December, 1784. During the whole

time she seems rarely to have met Boswell. The only allusions that I can discover in the Diary are a casual description of him as a "caricature of all Dr. Johnson's admirers" (1781), and in a humorous account she gives of a talk she had with the famous General Paoli (in October, 1782). "The General's English," she writes, "is blundering but not unpretty. Speaking of his first acquaintance with Mr. Boswell he said: 'He came to my country, and he fetched me some letter of recommending him, but I was of the belief that he might be an impostor, and I supposed in my minte he was an espy; for I look away from him, and in a moment I look to him again, and I behold his tablets. Oh! he was to the work of writing down all I say! Indeed, I was angry. But soon I discover he was no impostor and no espy; and I only find I was myself the monster he had come to discern.'"

As it was at the time of Fanny's conversation with the General fourteen years since Boswell's visit to Corsica, it is plain that he began to train early for what was to be the great work of his life.

In January, 1778, Fanny Burney published almost surreptitiously her first novel, "Evelina." She did not exactly awake to find herself famous, for the book appeared without an author's name. The veil of anonymity was coyly but rapidly lifted, and at the age of twenty-six she became

the most piquant and the most talked about figure in the literary world.

“*Evelina*” is still a readable book, but it is perhaps difficult now to understand its immediate and overwhelming success. The most fastidious critics were warmest in its praise. Both Burke and Sir Joshua Reynolds sat up all night reading it. Dr. Johnson’s admiration of it knew no bounds.

The golden age of the English novel—the age of Richardson and Fielding and Sterne—may be said to have come to an end with the publication of the “*Vicar of Wakefield*” and the “*Sentimental Journey*,” ten years before “*Evelina*” appeared. There was, it is true, no slackening of creative productivity. The greatest of English comedies, *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) and the *School for Scandal* (1777) were still new to the stage; Johnson’s own Lives of the Poets were beginning to come out, and Gibbon’s first volume (1776) was a recent addition to the booksellers’ shelves. But the stream of fiction had for the time being dried up. With “*Evelina*” it began to flow again in a new channel.

Of the celebrated Diary, which Fanny began at the time of the publication of “*Evelina*,” and which is my main authority for this paper, I will say nothing except that few books start so well and develop so disappointingly. And indeed this is true of the authoress herself.

Fanny Burney's talent hardly survived her transplantation in 1786 to Queen Charlotte's Court, and in that sterilizing atmosphere it slowly but steadily withered away. The process of its decadence could not be more surely shown than by a comparison of her third novel, "Camilla" (published in 1796), with "Evelina," and even "Cecilia" (published in 1782). The two first volumes of the Diary, written while she was still a free woman, have a fascination which is quite their own; nor do they, or any of her works, contain passages which equal, in quickness of observation and vividness of portraiture, those which describe the origin and progress of her intercourse with Dr. Johnson.

Dr. Burney taught music to the eldest Miss Thrale, and communicated to her mother the still well-kept secret of the authorship of "Evelina." Mrs. Thrale, enchanted herself, lent the book to Dr. Johnson, who at once "protested that there were passages in it which might do honour to Richardson," and this apparently encouraged her to disclose to him that it was the work of the daughter of his old friend. The immediate result was an invitation to Fanny and her father to meet the Doctor at Streatham Place.

The Diary may now be allowed to tell its own story :

"(August, 1778). I have now to write an account of the most consequential day I have

spent since my birth : namely, my Streatham visit. . . . Soon after we were seated (at dinner) this Great Man (Dr. Johnson) entered. I have so true a veneration for him that the very sight of him inspires me with delight and reverence, notwithstanding the cruel infirmities to which he is subject ; for he has almost perpetual convulsive movements, either of his hands, lips, feet, or knees, and sometimes of all together.*

“ Mrs. Thrale introduced me to him, and he took his place. We had a noble dinner, and a most elegant dessert. Dr. Johnson, in the middle of dinner, asked Mrs. Thrale what was in some little pies that were near him.

“ ‘ Mutton,’ answered she, ‘ so I don’t ask you to eat any, because I know you despise it.’

“ ‘ No, madam, no,’ cried he ; ‘ I despise nothing that is good of its sort ; but I am too proud now to eat of it. Sitting by Miss Burney makes me very proud to-day ! ’

“ ‘ Miss Burney,’ said Mrs. Thrale, laughing, ‘ you must take great care of your heart if Dr. Johnson attacks it ; for I assure you he is not often successless.’

“ ‘ What’s that you say, madam ? ’ cried he ;

* “ His mouth is almost constantly opening and shutting as if he was chewing. He has a strange method of frequently twisting his fingers, and twisting his hands. His body is in continual agitation, *see-sawing* up and down ; his feet are never a moment quiet ; and, in short, his whole person is in *perpetual motion*.” (Early Diary, 1889, II., 154.)

' are you making mischief between the young lady and me already ? '

" ' Nothing is so fatiguing,' said Mrs. Thrale, ' as the life of a wit ; Garrick and Wilkes are the two oldest men of their ages I know ; for they have both worn themselves out by being eternally on the rack to give entertainment to others.'

" ' David, madam,' said the Doctor, ' looks much older than he is ; for his face has had double the business of any other man's ; it is never at rest ; when he speaks one minute, he has quite a different countenance to what he assumes the next ; I don't believe he ever kept the same look for half an hour together, in the whole course of his life ; and such an eternal, restless, fatiguing play of the muscles must certainly wear out a man's face before its real time.'

" The next name that was started, was that of Sir John Hawkins :* and Mrs. Thrale said, ' Why now, Dr. Johnson, he is another of those whom you suffer nobody to abuse but yourself ; Garrick is one, too ; for if any other person speaks against him, you browbeat him in a minute ! '

" ' Why, madam,' answered he, ' they don't know when to abuse him, and when to praise him ; I will allow no man to speak ill of David

* Sir John Hawkins, 1719-80, author, like Dr. Burney, of a "History of Music," five vols., 1776, and of a "Life of Johnson" (1787). He was one of the Doctor's Executors.

that he does not deserve ; and as to Sir John, why really I believe him to be an honest man at the bottom ; but to be sure he is penurious, and he is mean, and it must be owned he has a degree of brutality, and a tendency to savageness, that cannot easily be defended.'

"We all laughed, as he meant we should, at this curious manner of speaking in his favour, and he then related an anecdote that he said he knew to be true in regard to his meanness. He said that Sir John and he once belonged to the same club, but that as he ate no supper after the first night of his admission, he desired to be excused paying his share.

"' And was he excused ? '

"' Oh yes ; for no man is angry at another for being inferior to himself ! We all scorned him, and admitted his plea. For my part I was such a fool as to pay my share for wine, though I never tasted any. But Sir John was a most *unclubbable* man ! '

Later on in the same month Fanny was again a guest at Streatham, where for the best part of three years she spent her happiest and most interesting days :

"I say strange things," said the Doctor at breakfast, "but I mean no harm."

Speaking of a personage in "Evelina"—Mr. Smith—Johnson declared : "Harry Fielding never drew so good a character. . . . Madam,

there is no character better drawn anywhere—in any book or by any author."

"Never," confesses Fanny, "did I feel so delicious a confusion since I was born."

Later on, in the Library, "where we had a very nice eonfab. about various books," she and Mrs. Thrale began to talk about Goldsmith. "Dr. Johnson came in; and we told him what we were about."

"Ah, madam," cried he, "Goldsmith was not scrupulous; but he would have been a great man had he known the value of his own internal resources."

He proceeded to pooh-pooh (as he always did) the "Vicar of Wakefield": "There is nothing of real life in it, and very little of nature. It is a mere fanciful performance."

"He then" (says the Diary) "seated himself upon a sofa, and calling to me said: 'Come—Evelina—come and sit by me.' I obeyed and he took me almost in his arms—that is, one of his arms, for one would go at least three times round me—and half-laughing, half-serious, he charged me to be a 'good girl.' 'But, my dear,' continued he, with a very droll look, 'what makes you so fond of the Scotch? I don't like you for that: I hate these Scotch, and so must you.'"

Asked why he had never been to see a once notorious lady, Mrs. Rudd, "Why, Madam, I believe I should, if it was not for the newspapers;

but I am prevented many frolics, that I should like very well, since I am become such a theme for the papers."

In the same connection, a later entry (September) may be cited :

" We were talking of the licentiousness of the newspapers, and Dr. Johnson said :

" ' I wonder if they have never yet had a touch at little Burney.'

" ' Oh, Heaven forbid,' cried I, ' I am sure if they did, I believe I should try the depth of Mr. Thrale's spring pond.'

" ' No, no, my dear,' cried he, kindly, ' you must resolve not to mind them ; you must set yourself against them, and not let any such nonsense affect you.' "

It was in the course of one of these conversations that the Doctor gave his well-known description of his unsuccessful attempt to make the best of his pensioner, Poll Carmichael : " Poll," said he, " is a stupid slut ; I had some hope of her at first ; but when I talked to her tightly and closely, I could make nothing of her : she was wiggle-waggle, and I could never persuade her to be categorical."

" To-morrow, Sir," announced Mrs. Thrale, " Mrs. Montagu dines here, and then you will have talk enough." (Mrs. Montagu, adds the Diarist, is ranked by Mrs. Thrale as the " first of women in the literary way," and is " in very

great estimation even with Dr. Johnson himself, *when others do not praise her improperly.*" "She diffuses," he said, "more knowledge in her conversation than any woman I know, or indeed almost any man.")

"Dr. Johnson" (the Diary proceeds) "began to see-saw with a countenance strongly expressive of inward fun, and after enjoying it some time in silence he suddenly, and with great animation, turned to me and cried :

"' Down with her, Burney!—down with her!—spare her not!—attack her, fight her, and down with her at once! You are a rising wit, and she is at the top; and when I was beginning the world, and was nothing and nobody, the joy of my life was to fire at all the established wits! and then everybody loved to halloo me on. But there is no game now; everybody would be glad to see me conquered: but then, when I was new, to vanquish the great ones was all the delight of my poor little dear soul! So at her, Burney—at her, and down with her!'"

He adds : "Always fly at the eagle!"

The Doctor could not, however, be persuaded to stay till Mrs. Montagu arrived, and when the "Queen of the Blues" appeared, Fanny was frankly disappointed; though she had "a sensible and penetrating countenance," and the "air and manner of a woman accustomed to being distinguished," "I thought her in a medium way."

She even ignored Mrs. Montagu's invitation to the house-warming of her new palace in Portman Square: for, as she says, in the Burney dialect, "I have no notion of snapping at invites from the eminent."

It must be admitted that when Mrs. Thrale and Miss Burney got Dr. Johnson to themselves (to parody a familiar Oxford epigram), it might be said of them :

Each ladies flattery from her separate pail,
Thrale vies with Burney : Burney vies with Thrale.

"Whenever," says the Diary, "he is below stairs he keeps me a prisoner, for he does not like that I should quit the room a moment: if I rise, he constantly calls out, 'Don't you go, little Burney.'" No wonder.

A few days later he said to Mrs. Thrale, "I think I have had no hero for a great while: Dr. Goldsmith was my last; but I have had none since his time till my little Burney came."

The affair developed rapidly, and early in November (still 1778) we come to the First Kiss. Here again it will be best to cite the text of the Diary :

"In the evening the company divided pretty much into parties, and almost everybody walked upon the gravel-walk before the windows. I was going to have joined some of them, when Dr. Johnson stopped me, and asked how I did.

“ ‘ I was afraid, sir,’ cried I, ‘ you did not intend to know me again, for you have not spoken to me before since your return from town.’

“ ‘ My dear,’ cried he, taking both my hands, ‘ I was not sure of you, I am so near-sighted, and I apprehended making some mistake.’

“ Then drawing me very unexpectedly towards him, he actually kissed me ! ”

Mrs. Thrale, lurking in the background, burst into a laugh, and said “ she would go and walk with the rest, if she did not fear for my reputation in being left with the Doctor.”

“ ‘ Aye, madam,’ said the Doctor, ‘ we shall do very well ; but I assure you I sha’n’t part with Miss Burney ! ’

“ And he held me by both hands : and when Mrs. Thrale went, he drew me a chair himself, facing the window, close to his own ; and thus *tête-à-tête* we continued almost all the evening.”

In the following February (1779) Fanny was again a guest at Streatham in the company of Dr. Johnson. She was then engaged, with the encouragement of Mrs. Thrale and Arthur Murphy, on a comedy—*The Willings*—which, by the joint and probably judicious advice of her father and her oldest and most trusted friend, whom she called “ Daddy ” Crisp, was never produced. Dr. Johnson, to whom she imparted her secret, gave her some sage counsels, at the end of which, “ grasping my hand with the most affectionate

warmth," he said, "I wish you success, I wish you well, my dear little Burney. . . . There is none like you, my dear little Burney : good-night, my darling."

Fanny does not seem to have treated the sentimental aspect of the situation with any seriousness. Writing shortly after this scene to her "Daddy" Crisp, she says : "Dr. Johnson has more fun and comical humour and love of nonsense about him than almost anybody I ever saw." When one remembers the people among whom she moved—Burke, for instance, was one of her greatest admirers—her detachment from all external interests is remarkable. In the whole of the first two volumes of the Diary almost the only public event to which she refers is the Gordon Riots in 1780. Yet the time covered includes the last years of the ignominious Government of Lord North, the achievement of American independence, the establishment of Grattan's Parliament in Ireland, Rodney's great naval victory, the Relief of Gibraltar, the Coalition of Fox and North, and the formation of the Ministry of the younger Pitt. Except in a casual allusion to Burke's low spirits in the days of the Coalition, there is no evidence that she ever gave a thought to any of these things.

The death of Thrale in 1781, followed the next year by his widow's final departure from

Streatham, closed the scene in which Fanny had spent her brightest hours.*

Johnson's devotion was unabated. "Sir," he said to Dr. Burney, "I would have her Always Come and Never Go." It is about this time that she writes of him : " I rather think he grows gayer and gayer daily, and more ductile and pleasant."

In June, 1782, she published her second novel, "*Cecilia*." Its success rivalled that of "*Evelina*." Gibbon declared that he read the whole five volumes in a day. Burke doubted this, alleging that it had taken him three days to read, during which he never parted with the book. Dr. Johnson was enthusiastic in his commendations, but (though he never made the admission to Fanny) it seems doubtful whether he ever read it through : a compliment, however, which he paid to few books in the whole range of literature.

In October, 1782, Fanny went to stay with Mrs. Thrale at Brighton, and Johnson was her fellow-guest. It was the last time they spent together in the old way. One evening, to everyone's amazement, he accompanied the ladies to a ball, excusing himself with the remark : " It cannot be worse than being alone." Fanny

*Mrs. Thrale seems to have found Fanny a rather trying guest. She complains that she was ungrateful, touchy, and always " pining for home," notwithstanding that " I provide her with every wearable —every wishable indeed." ("*Thraliana*.)

was shocked by his growing violence in argument : “ What a pity that he will not curb the vehemence of his love of victory and superiority.” The result was that while the two ladies were asked out almost every evening, the Doctor was usually not included in the invitation. “ He is almost constantly omitted,” she writes, “ either from too much respect or too much fear. I am very sorry, for he hates being alone. . . . He is never aware that those who have been so ‘ downed ’ by him can never much covet so triumphant a visitor.” He was still true to her. On one of the rare occasions when he found himself at a crowded party, “ I came here,” he said, “ in full expectation of hearing no name but the name I love and pant to hear, while they are all talking from one corner to another of that jade Mrs. Siddons ” (who had just become the rage of the town, and put in the shade even the fame of the authoress of “ *Cecilia* ”).

In the last two years of his life (1783-4) Johnson’s infirmities grew upon him, and he was often a prisoner in Bolt Court, where from time to time Fanny came to see him. Of one such visit she writes (November, 1783) : “ Dr. Johnson was, if possible, more instructive, entertaining, good-humoured, and exquisitely fertile than ever. He thanked me repeatedly for coming, and was so kind I could hardly ever leave him.”

On another visit, the conversation turned upon the "eminent" Mrs. Montagu, between whom and Dr. Johnson a furious controversy had raged over his "*Life of Lord Lyttelton*." "I have never done her," said he to Fanny, "any serious harm—nor would I, though I could give her a bite! But she must provoke me first."

Then follows this characteristic utterance:

"In volatile talk, indeed, I may have spoken of her not much to her mind: for in the tumult of conversation, malice is apt to grow sprightly; and there, I hope, I am not yet decrepit."

"I most readily assured the Doctor," says Fanny, "that I have never yet seen him limp."

She had one more talk with him in November, 1784, a few weeks before he died. She asked him if he ever heard from Mrs. Thrale—now Mrs. Piozzi—whose marriage in the previous July overclouded Johnson's last months. "No," he replied, "nor write to her. I drive her quite from my mind. If I meet with one of her letters I burn it instantly. I have burnt all I can find. I never speak of her, and I desire never to hear of her more."

"He talked . . . upon our immortal Shakespeare with as much fire, spirit, wit, and truth of criticism and judgment as ever yet I have heard him." But he soon grew weary, and did not press her to stay, and as she left the room, "he called me back, in a solemn voice, and in a

manner the most energetic, said, ‘ Remember me in your prayers.’ ”

She never saw him again. Dr. Burney was with him for a few moments in his last days. “ When my father was leaving, he brightened up, something of his arch look returned, and he said, ‘ I think I shall throw the ball at Fanny yet.’ ”

I conclude with Fanny Burney’s own words : “ He was always indulgent to the young, he never attacked the unassuming, nor meant to terrify the diffident.”

V

SIR HENRY WOTTON

WITH SOME GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON STYLE IN
ENGLISH POETRY



V

SIR HENRY WOTTON

WITH SOME GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON STYLE IN
ENGLISH POETRY*

FIRST let me thank the members of the Association very heartily for having done me the honour to elect me their President in succession to a long line of eminent men of letters and of public servants. I assure you that I appreciate the distinction very highly. When I measure my own literary stock in trade, which at best is that of a somewhat threadbare amateur, with the abounding reservoir of erudition and expert knowledge of some of my predecessors in the Chair, I feel that it is becoming that I should choose a modest subject, and handle it with brevity. I propose to say a few words to you about a man who has always seemed to me to be one of the most interesting and remarkable figures, in what may be called the second rank of our English men of letters—Sir Henry Wotton. And that may possibly lead to one or two more general reflections on Style in English Poetry.

* Presidential Address to the English Association, May 30, 1919.

Sir Henry Wotton was born in the early years of Elizabeth, and died in the reign of Charles I. before the outbreak of the Civil War. His works, the well-known “*Reliquiae Wottonianae*,” were published in 1651. He enjoyed in his lifetime the close friendship, and was often, as we know, the fishing companion of Izaak Walton, who not only edited the “*Reliquiae*,” but prefixed to it perhaps the most charming of his delightful and, in their way, unrivalled biographies. The “*Life of Sir Henry Wotton*” ought to be familiar, and I suppose is, to every lover of English literature. I will not do more in the first instance than just recall its bare outline to your recollection.

He was the youngest son in his own generation of a family which produced a number of men of distinction in Tudor and early Stuart times. He had great natural gifts and graces, being, as Walton tells us, “of a choice shape, tall of stature, and of a most persuasive behaviour.” But he had many of the instincts of the vagabond, and was generally in debt. After going through Winchester and Oxford, he spent the best part of the ten years between twenty and thirty in roving about the Continent, and sometimes, as in the case of the illustrious Isaac Casaubon, in whose house he lodged at Geneva, forgetting to pay his bills. “Time, travel and conversation,” says Walton, had “by this time made his com-

pany one of the delights of mankind," and he appears on his return to England to have fascinated the favourite Essex, in whose fall some years later he was very nearly involved. He made a hasty flight to France, and took refuge for some time with the Grand Duke of Tuscany in Florence. There is a strange story of his coming over from there to Scotland in disguise to reveal, and to help to frustrate, a conspiracy against the life of King James "then," in Walton's words, "King of the Scots, but confidently believed by most" in England—Queen Elizabeth being near her end—"to be the man upon whom the sweet trouble of kingly government would be imposed." That confident belief was soon realized, and one of the earliest acts of the new king, who was from the first, I may remind you, a confirmed and undefeated pacifist, was to give Sir Henry—whom he had knighted—the choice of several embassies. Wotton selected Venice, and it was there, with one or two intervals, that he spent the next twenty years of his life.

On his return in 1624, by a piece of great good luck, for he was in sore pecuniary straits, and as he said himself "the want of money wrinkled his face with care," he was nominated by the Crown to the vacant Provostship of Eton, proceeded to Deacon's orders, and spent in congenial and dignified surroundings the remainder of his days, exercising hospitality, and enjoying the

companionship of friends, such as Walton, Hales, and, towards the end of his life, of Milton. It is interesting to remark that another candidate for the Provostship was Lord Bacon, then recently fallen from his high estate. The Lord Keeper Williams, the last ecclesiastic I think to hold the Great Seal, in a letter dealing with the appointment and the candidates, writes : "It is somewhat necessary to be a good scholar, but more to be a good husband, and a careful manager and a stayed man, which no man can be that is so much indebted as the Lord St. Albans." Sir Henry Wotton, who had had great difficulty in raising £500 to settle himself in the College, would hardly seem to satisfy the Lord Keeper's standard. He is said to have written the epitaph on Bacon's monument at St. Albans. Anyway, he became one of the best and most successful Provosts that Eton has ever known.

It was not on the whole an eventful life, but it had one or two episodes which may be noted before we say anything of the general character of his literary work.

The first is the controversy in which he was involved during his first embassy to Venice with the notorious Jasper Scioppius. Scioppius was one of the most curious products of his age. He was born in the Palatinate, and brought up a Protestant, but was converted to Romanism—*mirabile dictu*—by reading the Annals of Baronius.

He served his adopted church in the way for which he was best fitted, by literary facility, and a temperament of unscrupulous violence; he became in fact the most fluent and foul-mouthed controversialist of his time. He is said not even to have spared Cicero, but his favourite targets were the great contemporary men of learning, of whom by far the most illustrious were Protestants. "*Jesuita nullus hodie doctus . . . Casaubonus unus plus potest quam tota Societas.*"* Such was the judgement of Joseph Scaliger, and Scioppius (who had lashed the Jesuits in his time) gave himself with fiendish vindictiveness and malignity to the task of embittering the last years of that greatest of scholars, and most high-minded of men, by almost incredible vilifications and scurrilities. It was in vain that Scaliger, then near his death, vindicated himself in one of the most pungent and most brilliant of his writings. The lies had got the start, and there was no overtaking them. It was another illustration of Bacon's grim aphorism: "*Audacter calumniare; semper aliquid haeret.*"

It must be admitted, however, that this practised literary assassin found his match when he tried conclusions with Sir Henry Wotton. The story, I think, is fairly well known—perhaps it is the only thing that many people have ever

* "Scaligerana," 127, 205.

heard of him—that on his way to take up his Embassy at Venice he was asked at an evening party somewhere in Germany to write a sentence in what Walton calls an “Albo,” a detestable practice which still survives in some parts of the world. Wotton was so ill-advised as to attempt a humorous definition of his own office, and he wrote the famous words : “*Legatus est vir bonus peregre missus ad mentiendum reipublicae causa*” —or in English : “An Ambassador is an honest man sent to lie abroad for the good of his country.” Somehow or other, years afterwards the “Albo” fell into the hand of Scioppius, whose batteries were just then in action against James I., and he gleefully printed Wotton’s epigram as a specimen of the maxims professed and practised by a Protestant King and his Ambassadors. It nearly cost Sir Henry the King’s favour, but he made himself secure by composing and publishing a Latin tirade against Scioppius, written with what was then described as “truly classic elegance,” and rivalling in scurrility the best efforts of his traducer. Wotton was the mildest tempered and most courteous of men ; and it must have been with a scholar’s reluctance that he found himself compelled to label even Scioppius with such epithets as “*famelicus transfuga*”—in English “starveling apostate ;” “*Romanae curiae lutulentus circulator*”—“dirty mountebank of the Roman Court ;” and, perhaps most

mordant of all, “*Semicocetus grammaticaster*”—“a half-baked little pedant.”

Another incident, which led to a much more worthy display of Wotton’s literary gifts, was his making the acquaintance, and—which was the same thing—falling under the spell, of the most fascinating of all royal personages—King James’s daughter, Elizabeth of Bohemia, the “Winter Queen.” Whether Shakespeare’s *Tempest* was or was not written for her wedding, it seems certain that it was performed there, and you will find some charming pages on the matter in Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch’s book on “Shakespeare’s Workmanship.”* She inspired Wotton, like so many others, with a romantic and lifelong devotion, of which some interesting illustrations are to be found in Walton’s “Life.” But for our purpose it is more material to record that it was in her honour that he composed the incomparable lines “On his Mistress, the Queen of Bohemia,” which, if he had written nothing else, would give him an inevitable place even in the most fastidiously selected English anthology.

Wotton wrote very little. The “*Reliquiae*” is a thin book in point of bulk; nearly half of it consists of letters; and it contains no more than twenty-five poems, of which ten are assigned by the editor to other writers than Wotton himself. He was a desultory, easy-going man, interested

* p. 308 sq.

in and indeed imbued with every form of culture, and with more than a smattering of physical science. Walton has some admirable illustrations of the good-humoured and characteristic facility with which he evaded giving his opinion as to the ultimate destiny of Papists and Arminians. He was constantly taking up literary enterprises, only after a short trial to lay them aside. Walton tells us that he had proposed to himself in his young days to write a Life of Luther and a history of the German reformation, and during his embassies and travels accumulated a mass of materials for the work. I will give you the pleasure of listening to his biographer's own words, which are inimitable : “ But in the midst of this Reign, his late Majesty King Charles I., who knew the value of Sir Henry Wotton’s pen, did, by a persuasive loving violence, to which may be added a promise of five hundred pounds a year, force him to lay Luther aside, and betake himself to write the history of England : in which he proceeded to write some short characters of a few kings, as a foundation upon which he meant to build ; but for the present meant to be more large in the story of Henry VI., the founder of that College in which he then enjoyed all the worldly happiness of his present being. But Sir Henry died in the midst of this undertaking ; and the footsteps of his labours are not recoverable by a more than common diligence.”

It is by his poetry and his poetry alone that he still lives ; some four poems and perhaps a couple of hymns. It is instructive to compare his case with that of Cowley, whose “Elegy on Sir Henry Wotton” follows Walton’s “Life.” Cowley was an infant prodigy, who had written copiously, and as well as he ever did afterwards, before he was of age. His reputation in his lifetime was enormous, rivalling and perhaps outstripping that of Milton ; his poems fill a thick volume including the fragment of a portentous epic, the “*Davideis*,” with which I believe I am one of not many people who have attempted to grapple ; and his funeral in Westminster Abbey was long remembered. Yet within sixty or seventy years of his death Pope asked, “Who reads Cowley ? ” And who but literary experts and students read him now ?

There are, of course, two poems by Wotton which stand out by themselves. The “Tears wept at the grave of Sir Albertus Morton” is a dignified and pathetic performance. The hymn which he wrote on his death-bed, which I have never yet heard “in quires and places where they sing,” is worth at least two-thirds of the contents of a modern hymn-book. But it is the lines on “Elizabeth of Bohemia”—written probably in 1619—and “The Character of a Happy Life”—a little earlier in date—which give Wotton his immortality. Sir Sidney Lee tells us that

there is a manuscript copy of the “Happy Life,” in the hand of Ben Jonson, and there is a legend that he knew the lines by heart. No wonder. What is that peculiar quality which has given these pieces their enduring power of appeal to every successive generation among the lovers of poetry? They are so familiar that I will only quote the first stanza of the one and the last stanza of the other:

“ You meaner beauties of the night
That poorly satisfie our Eyes,
More by your number than your light,
You common people of the skies ;
What are you when the Moon shall rise ? ”

“ This man is freed from servile hands
Of hope to rise or fear to fall ;
Lord, of himself, though not of lands,
And, having nothing, yet hath all.”

If I may answer my own question, I should say it is that they possess the sovereign quality of Style. Style in poetry, even more perhaps than in prose, is an art, even an artifice; it is sought out, thought out, wrought out. It does not fetter inspiration, though you may have inspiration without it. It is both a vesture and a vehicle; incomunicable, almost indefinable, never mistakable. It is best understood not by description or by analysis, but by illustration. Among all the Classical poets, whether Greek or Latin, Virgil is the great example. I won’t

trouble you with much Latin, and what I have to give I will give in the old English pronunciation which I believe is now obsolete :

“ Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt ; ”*

or,

“ Di Iovis in tectis iram miserantur inanem
amborum, et tantos mortalibus esse labores ; ”†

or again,

“ Dum domus Aeneae Capitoli immobile saxum
accolet, imperiumque pater Romanus habebit.”‡

What a difference is there, not only from the simplicity, the chaste economy, the severe restraint, of the greatest Greek models, but from the strained points, the almost iridescent glitter, the tumid verbiage, of even the best of the rhetorical poets of the Silver Age !

English poetry is specially rich in great masters of Style. Shakespeare was so much else that we hardly number him among them ; yet when he pleased he could excel them all. Take one or two of the simplest illustrations. Fortinbras at the end of the last scene in *Hamlet* :

“ O proud death,
What feast is toward in thine eternal cell ; ”§

or Leontes in *A Winter's Tale* :

“ Stars, stars,
And all eyes else dead coals ; ”||

* *Aen.* i., 462-3.

† *Aen.* ix., 758-9.

‡ *Aen.* ix., 448-9.

§ *Hamlet*, V., ii.

|| *Winter's Tale*, V., i.

or Cleopatra :

“ Give me my robe, put on my crown ; I have
Immortal longings in me ; ”*

or Othello, in a Miltonian outburst :

“ Like to the Pontic Sea
Whose icy current and compulsive course
Ne’er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on
To the Propontic and the Hellespont ; ”†

or in the most perfect of all lyrics in *Cymbeline* :

“ Fear no more the heat of the sun.”‡

These, and they could easily be multiplied by the hundred, cannot for pure Style be surpassed.

But Shakespeare we must always leave in a class by himself. With that reservation, by far our greatest master in poetic style, in the sense in which I am now using the word, is Milton. You cannot open a page of “ Paradise Lost,” or of “ Lycidas,” or “ Comus ”; you can hardly find one of the Sonnets, which does not provide you with a wealth of examples. I will be content with one citation from what has been described by an acute and accomplished critic as “ probably the most unadorned poem in any language,” “ Paradise Regained.” It is singled out by Mr. Bailey in his admirable monograph on Milton ; the “ famous temptation ” of the banquet, where the profuse luxuriance of a Roman feast is contrasted with

“ that crude apple that diverted Eve.”

* *Antony and Cleopatra*, V., ii. † *Othello*, III., iii.

‡ *Cymbeline*, IV., ii.

I quote only the last lines :

“ Distant more,
Under the trees now tripped, now solemn stood,
Nymphs of Diana’s train, and Naiades
With fruits and flowers from Amalthea’s horn,
And ladies of the Hesperides, that seemed
Fairer than feigned of old, or fabled since,
Of faery damsels, met in forests wide
By knights of Logres, or of Lyones,
Lancelot, or Pelleas, or Pellenore.”*

“ Unadorned ” indeed ! Who now or ever since has adorned like that ?

Andrew Marvell was born fifty years later than Wotton ; his poetic output is also relatively small, but in this particular respect the best of it is of equal, if not of higher, value. Marvell also lives by six or seven poems, but they have the stamp of immortality. We have nothing finer of its kind than this :

“ Nor called the gods with vulgar spite,
To vindicate his helpless right ;
But bowed his comely head
Down, as upon a bed ; ”†

except perhaps this :

“ But at my back I always hear
Time’s winged chariot hurrying near ;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.”‡

Finally, before we leave the seventeenth century, you have as noble a specimen of the grand Style

* “ Paradise Regained,” Book II., 353-61.

† “ Ode upon Cromwell’s Return from Ireland.”

‡ “ To his Coy Mistress.”

as is to be found anywhere, in the final stanza, too long to quote, of Dryden's "Ode to the pious memory of the accomplished young lady, Mistress Anne Killigrew."

The fashionable Style of the eighteenth century, even when practised by such a genius as Pope, is too grooved and mechanical to illustrate my particular theme; until you come to the "Elegy" of Gray, of which it is best to say nothing except that it stands by itself. I pass by the great poets of the Revival—Burns, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley—to name the two who took up and carried on the torch—Keats and Tennyson. Parenthetically I should claim a place, even if a subsidiary place, for Walter Savage Landor:

"I strove with none, for none was worth my strife,
Nature I loved, and, next to Nature, Art;
I warmed both hands before the fire of life,
It sinks, and I am ready to depart."

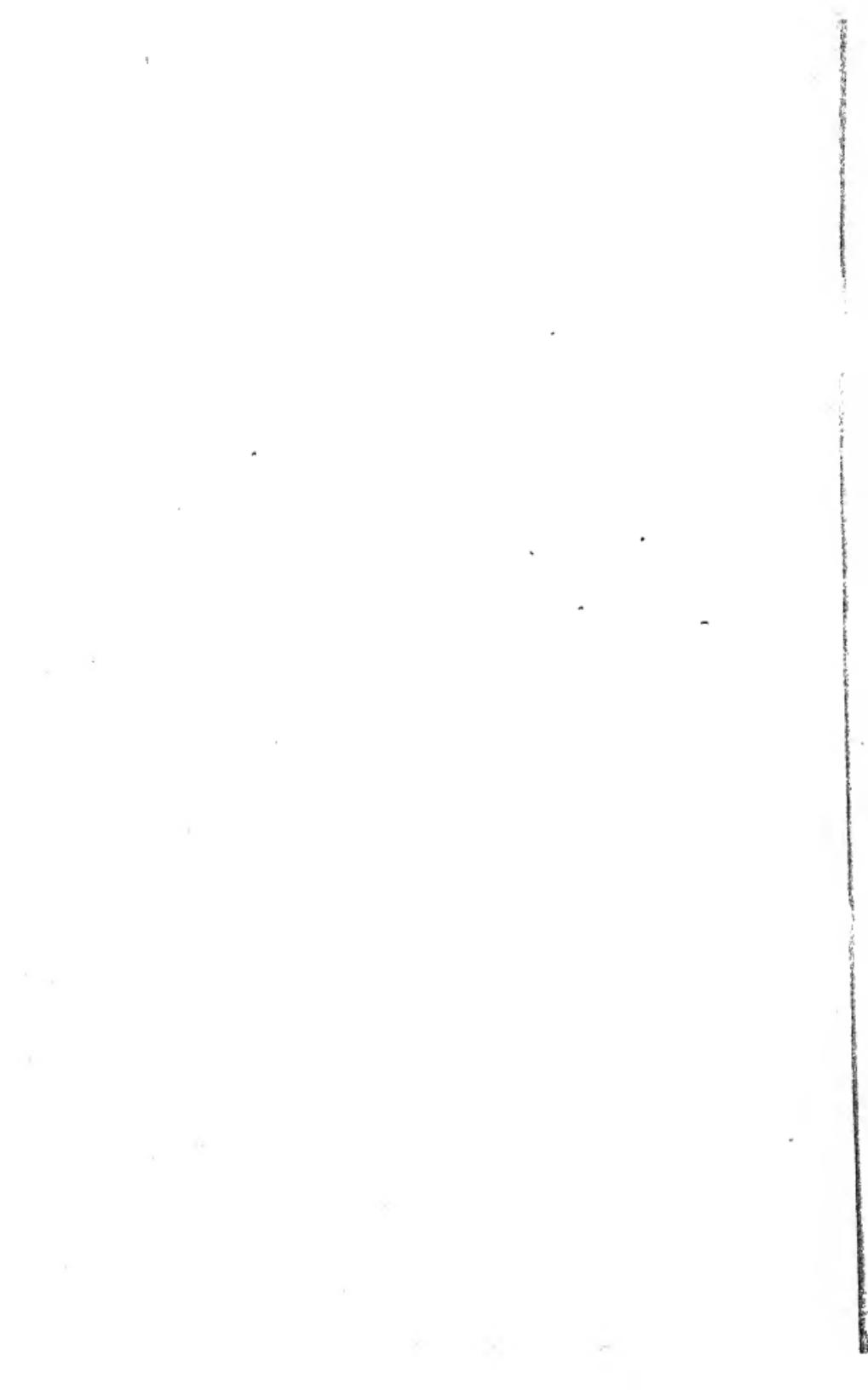
But Keats and Tennyson have claims to the great succession which in both cases are beyond dispute. I will make only a single quotation from each. The first is from the Sonnet on "Chapman's 'Homer'" :

"Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien."

The other is from the opening lines of “ Ulysses ” :

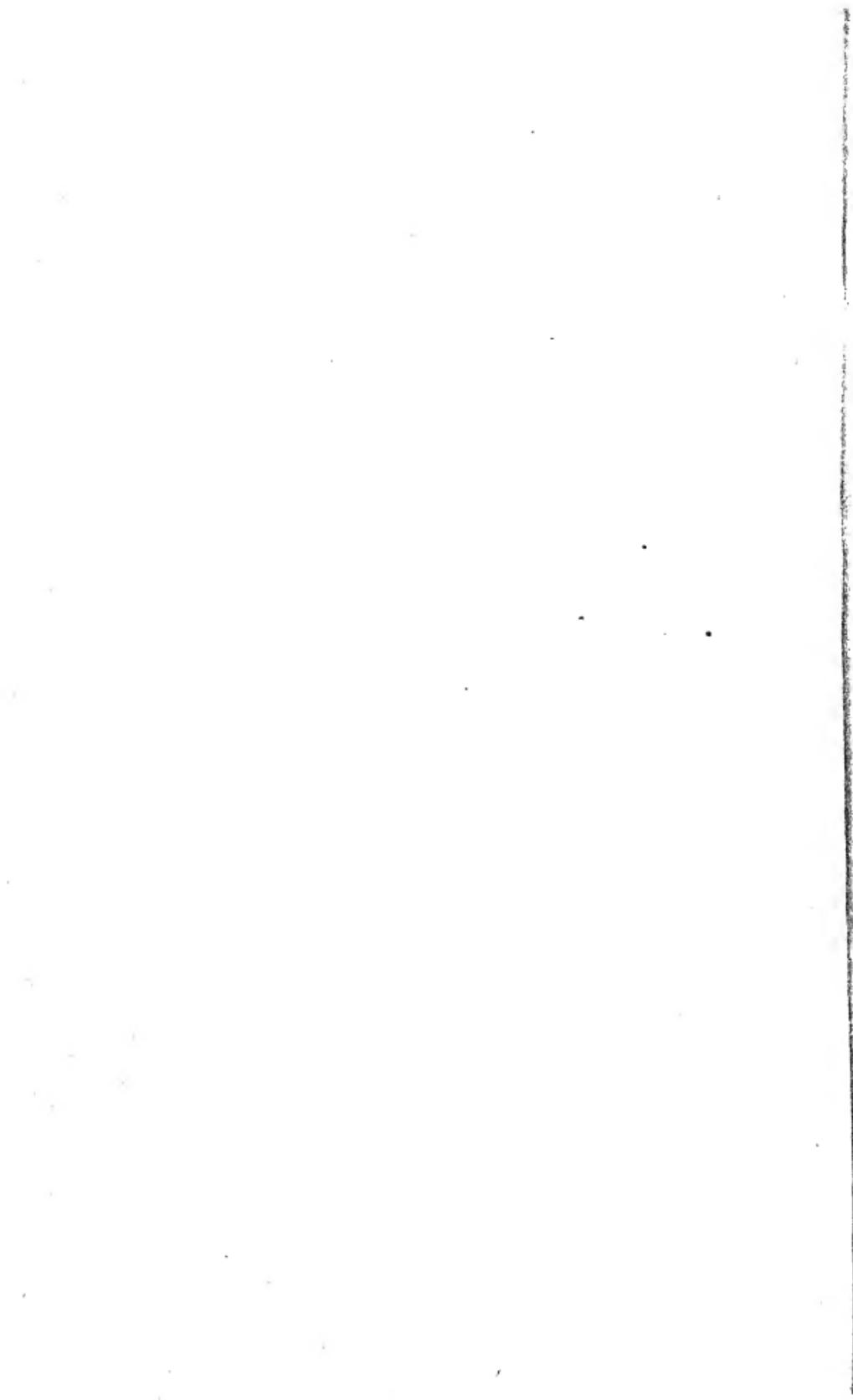
“ I am become a name ;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known ; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all ;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.”

Well, in these desultory reflections we have travelled a long way from Sir Henry Wotton. He was not, either as a man or as a poet, of heroic stature, or of far-reaching range. But he was an artist to the core, and in these days when to an old-fashioned ear there seems a fine, and now and again an almost arrogant, disorder in some of the outpourings of the contemporary muse, it may not be amiss to go back to the studied efforts of the masters of Poetic Style.



VI

READING AND WRITING



VI

READING AND WRITING*

I DON'T know how many of you have read a celebrated novel called "Coningsby," which was written by a very distinguished statesman and man of letters, Mr. Disraeli. He had not had the advantage of being educated here, but with a remarkable union of imagination and audacity he depicts the sayings and doings of the Eton boys of that time on the great triennial festival—Montem—to which old Etonians were accustomed to resort. Among the visitors on this particular occasion were the Duke of Wellington, and one of the richest and most powerful noblemen of that time, who is thinly disguised under the name of Lord Monmouth. And Disraeli puts into Lord Monmouth's mouth, as he surveys the scene, these words :

"I would give his fame" (pointing to the Duke) "if I had it, and my wealth, to be sixteen."

I have tried to think what, if I were sixteen and surrounded every day by the associations

* Address delivered at Eton College on the 13th June, 1918.

of this famous College, I should like to hear from an older man, who in one respect, at any rate, resembled Odysseus, that he had seen a great deal of a great variety of people. And on the whole after some reflection I came to the conclusion which may seem paradoxical : that I should say a few words to you on what sounds like the most elementary of all subjects : Reading and Writing. For I have found that one of the rarest figures that one encounters in the highways and byways of life is that of the man or woman who knows both how to read and how to write. Yet that, after all, is the goal of any education that is worthy of the name : for it means that one has acquired the power of taking in, and the power of giving out.

I do not propose to enlarge upon the mechanical side of reading and writing. Good enunciation and legible penmanship may seem to be commonplace accomplishments, but you have only to go into an ordinary church on Sunday and hear the lessons read; or to open the morning letter-bag of any busy man, to realize how uncommon they are in everyday life. To speak so that you can be heard and understood, and to write so that you can be read, ought to be regarded as the irreducible minimum of education. But we will use the terms to-day in the larger sense, in which the

one means the furnishing of the mind with the best of what has been written, and the other the faculty of expressing and communicating to others what one has read and thought. In Bacon's famous phrase: "Reading maketh a full man, and writing an exact man."

It is a mistake to suppose that we can safely judge either of persons or of communities by the eagerness or the extent of their reading. They can be (as history shows) both efficient and interesting, and yet extremely ill-read. There are no people of whom—as you know only too well—more has been read and written than the people of Athens in the age of Pericles and Socrates. But it has been said of them—I think by Mr. Disraeli, whom I have already quoted—that they lived in the open air and read no books. On the other hand, there is something that is portentous and almost uncanny in the records of the omnivorous and encyclopædic readers. Such, for instance, was Joseph Scaliger, the greatest of scholars, who at the age of nineteen, without a teacher, a grammar, or a dictionary, with practically no previous knowledge of Greek, and with nothing to help but a Latin crib, read through Homer and the whole series of the Greek poets in the space of four months. In those days—the sixteenth century—the women in this matter rivalled the men. Queen Elizabeth and her kinswoman, Lady

Jane Grey, each knew, and could read, and speak, five languages in addition to their own.

Roger Ascham, who was tutor to Queen Elizabeth in her youth, and the greatest dominie of his time, tells us in his book, "The Schoolmaster":

"Before I went into Germanie, I came to Brodegate in Leicestershire, to take my leave of that noble Lady Jane Grey, to whom I was exceeding much beholdinge. Her parentes, the Duke and the Duches, with all the houshould, gentlemen and gentlewomen, were hūting in the parke. I found her in her chamber, readinge Phaedon Platonis in Greeke, and that with as much delite, as some gentlemen would read a merie tale in Bocase. After salutation, and dewtie done, with some other taulke, I asked her, why she would leefe such pastime in the parke? Smiling, she answered me; 'I wisse, all their sport in the parke is but a shadoe to that pleasure that I find in Plato. Alas! good folke, they never felt what trewe pleasure ment.'

"'And howe came you, Madame,' quoth I, 'to this deepe knowledge of pleasure? And what did chieflie allure you unto it, seeinge not many women but verie fewe men have attained thereunto.'

"'I will tell you,' quoth she, 'and tell you a truth, which perchance ye will marvell at. One of the greatest benefites that ever God

gave me, is that he sent me so sharpe and severe parentes, and so jentle a scholemaster in Mr. Elmer. For when I am in presence eyther of father or mother; whether I speake, kepe silence, sit, stand, or go, eate, drinke, be merie, or sad, be sowing, playing, dauncing, or doing anie thing else, I must do it, as it were, in such weight, measure, and number, even so perfitelie as God made the world, or else I am so sharplie taunted, so cruellie threatened, yea presentlie, sometimes with pinches, nippes, and bobbes, and other waies, which I will not name for the honor I bear them, so without measure misordered, that I thincke myselfe in hell, tille time come that I must go to Mr. Elmer; who teacheth me so jentlie, so pleasantlie, with such fair allurements to learninge, that I thinke all the time nothing whiles I am with him. And when I am called from him, I fall a weeping because whatsoever I do els, but learninge, is full of grief, trouble, feare, and whole misliking unto me. And thus my booke hath been so much pleasure, and bringeth dayly to me more pleasure and more, that, in respect of it, all other pleasures, in very deede, be but trifles, and troubles unto me.'"

Another case of an abnormally developed propensity is Macaulay, the most voracious and insatiable reader of the nineteenth century. He writes in a letter, dated 1851 :

"I finished the Iliad to-day. I had not read it through since the end of 1837, when I was at Calcutta. . . . I never admired the old fellow so much. . . . I could not tear myself away. I read the last 5 books at a stretch during my walk to-day." Earlier in his life (1834), when he was in India, he records: "I have read during the last fortnight before breakfast 3 books of Herodotus and 4 plays of Aeschylus."

Bacon said that "some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." Dr. Johnson—a great though desultory reader—boasted of his own proficiency in the art of skipping. Macaulay was endowed or afflicted with such a prodigious memory that, from the most ephemeral rubbish up to the great masterpieces of literature, he never forgot anything that he had read. Most of us do not need to be put on our guard against this danger.

But, to descend to the level of the ordinary man or boy of average faculty, while I do not presume to lay down any rules, there are one or two sign-posts and beacons which may show us, by way of guidance and by way of warning, both in reading and in writing, what to seek after and what to avoid. I confine myself in the few rough hints which I am going to give entirely to our own English language and literature.

The first thing of course is to search out and to stick to the great models. The art of writing poetry was developed with us as with some other—perhaps most other—peoples before the art of writing prose. Even in the great Elizabethan age English prose is still only struggling into form, through a jungle of experiments and conceits, from which it may be said to have emerged in the early years of the seventeenth century. But the writers of that century have never since been surpassed in all the variety of qualities which give English prose an unrivalled place among modern instruments of expression ; such prose, I mean, as is to be found in the Authorized Version of the Bible, in Bacon's Essays, in some (but by no means all) of the pamphlets of Milton, in Izaak Walton, Clarendon, and Sir Thomas Browne. In this company you cannot go far astray, and though the dialect and actual phraseology may often have an old-fashioned and even obsolete air, you will find in the choice of words, the rhythm of sentences, the building up of paragraphs, that these authors had a complete command of the whole art of style. Their most famous passages should be committed to memory. I cannot help thinking that while we are at school, it would be quite as useful to get into the habit of learning prose by heart as of learning poetry.

We cannot always, however, be breathing the

rarefied atmosphere of these great altitudes. For Reading ought to be not only an intellectual nutriment and discipline, but a delightful relaxation. I dare say you know the story of the Master—I don't know whether it happened here—who, having been much harassed and wearied by what seemed to him the needless fussiness of the fathers and mothers of his pupils, when he had to fill in the blank opposite "Conduct" in the term's report of one of the boys, wrote these words: "Dull but steady: would make an excellent parent."

We shall all (whatever our natural endowments) become dull—without necessarily becoming steady—if we neglect the lighter side of reading. And here I hope I shall not be thought to be either a fossil or a prig if I express my horror at the vast multiplication of flimsy rubbish, which in these days caters for the taste both of boys and of grown-up people. I sometimes turn over the samples which are to be found on the bookstall of a wayside station, and go back to my compartment with a heavy heart. I do not pretend to be particularly fastidious or exclusive, and I confess to an almost insatiable fondness for good detective stories—from the great M. Lecocq and the still greater Sherlock Holmes, down to the latest and least of their French and American rivals. But I am sure that in these days an enormous amount of time,

and of opportunity for real enjoyment, is wasted over empty and fleeting trivialities by people who will not take the trouble to go to the true fountain of pleasure which flows through the great masterpieces of fiction and biography. Do you read Scott ? Do you read Dickens ? Do you read Charles Kingsley—who was born one hundred years ago yesterday, and whose work is still fresh and vivid ? Do you read Boswell ? Young people are apt to think that humorous speech and writing (in the full sense) are quite a modern creation ; though we may still reserve a respectful and conventional laugh for the strange quips of Shakespeare's Clowns. Let me give you a specimen which I have not often seen quoted and which goes back to the reign of Queen Anne. It is from Hawkesworth's "Life of Swift," who as you know ended his unhappy days as Dean of St. Patrick's.

" His kitchen wench was a woman of large size, robust constitution and coarse features : whose face was much seared with the smallpox and furrowed by age : this woman he always distinguished by the name of Sweetheart.

" It happened one day that Sweetheart greatly over-roasted the only joint he had for dinner : upon which he sent for her and with great coolness and gravity, 'Sweetheart,' says he, 'take this down into the kitchen and do it less.' She replied that was impossible. 'Pray then,' said he,

'if you had roasted it too little, could not you have done it more ?' 'Yes,' she said, she could easily have done that. 'Why then, Sweet-heart,' replied the Dean, 'let me advise you if you must commit a fault, commit a fault that can be mended.' "

But it is time—for I must not keep you much longer—to say a word or two in the same practical spirit—about writing. Here again there are no universal rules : composition must vary with and be appropriate to the particular subject. You may perhaps have heard the old prescription for writing a love-letter : I will at any rate give it you in case, at some more or less remote date in the future, some of you might find it of service : that you should begin without knowing what you are going to say, and end without knowing what you have said. Let me strongly recommend to you, if you come across it, to read Sir A. Quiller-Couch's admirable Cambridge lectures "On the Art of Writing," and in particular, as showing us the temptations to which in these days we are most prone, his Chapter on "Jargon." I will only summarize in a sentence or two the qualities in writing—or for that matter in speaking—which seem to me to be of capital importance. They are commonplace but very difficult to practise.

The first is *clearness*. Obscurity and involution are the certain signs either of idleness, or

affectation, or muddy thinking, or pedantry : and these in the sphere of composition are the Cardinal Sins.

The next is *terseness*. We all know the benedictions that have been pronounced on the man who makes two blades of grass grow where only one grew before. An equally strong malediction is deserved by the writer or speaker who uses two words where one would suffice. That does not in the least imply that good writing should be indifferent to shades of meaning, to discrimination and, if necessary, accumulation of appropriate epithets, or to the graces and charms of metaphor and artistic ornament. Cicero and Burke (to take two illustrations) are vulgarly called diffuse writers : but if you examine their best passages (and every writer ought to be judged by his best) you will not find a superfluous word.

Subject to those two dominating principles there is no limit to the arts, or artifices, by which what we call style can be enriched, and adapted to its special purpose. One of the minor artifices (as I have called them), both in poetry and in prose, is alliteration, more often abused than fitly used. If you want to see and realize the subtle effect of the true art of alliteration, you will find countless instances in Shakespeare and Milton.

Another expedient, often resorted to by the

very best artists in style, is the use of monosyllables to express the emotion that is aroused by grave crises or in great moments. There are many examples in the masters of prose, but the best are to be found in the poets. I will only cite one : the words of Kent at the death of King Lear :

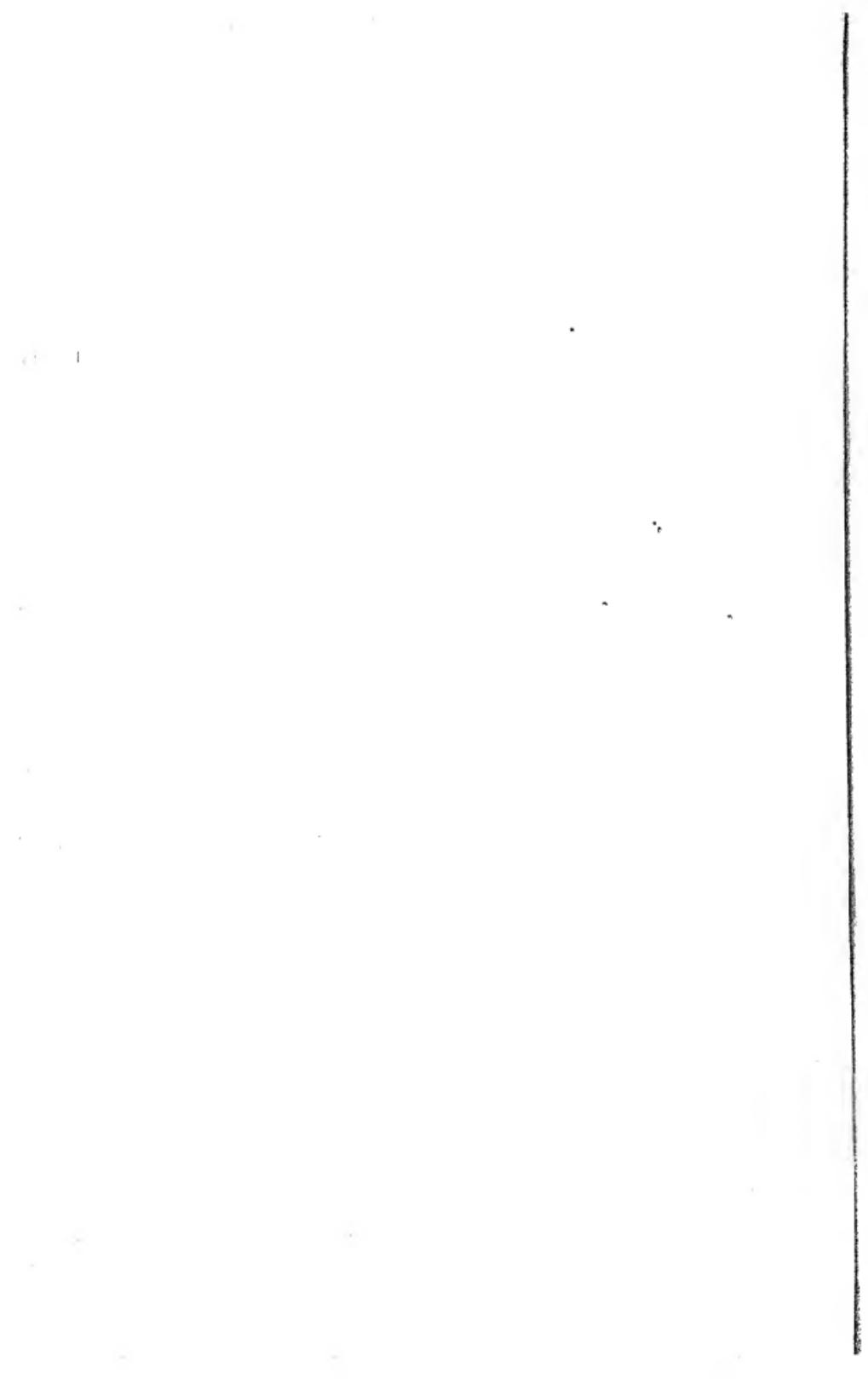
“ Vex not his ghost ; O let him pass ! he hates him
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer.”

Three lines : twenty-four words, and only one that is not a monosyllable ; and yet there is hardly a more moving or impressive passage in our own or any other literature.

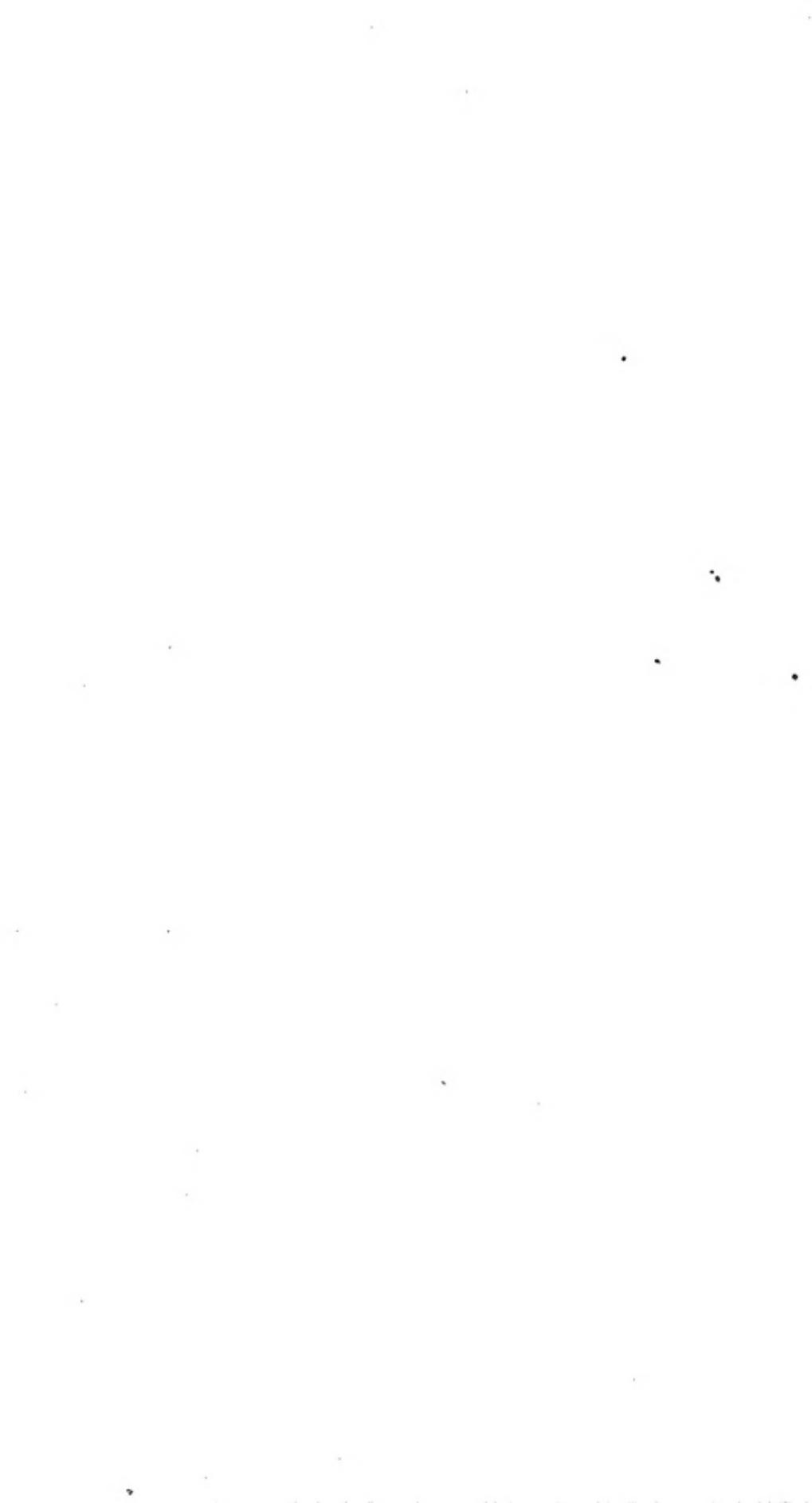
The subject is an inexhaustible one, but I have said enough for one afternoon. You here at Eton are the custodians of great traditions which it is the business of each generation to hand on to its successor if possible enlarged and enriched. Those traditions are drawn not only from the glories and heroisms of the battlefield, or the conflicts and labours of public life. They are illuminated by not a few of the most famous names in our literature. I mention almost at random—Wotton (who though not an Etonian was your Provost), Fielding, Gray, Shelley. As Wordsworth says :

“ Great men have been among you : hands that penned
And tongues that utter’d Wisdom.”

The English language, as it has been spoken and written by the most gifted of our race, is an unique heritage: see that you, with the special responsibilities which you owe to Eton, do your part to preserve and to transmit it undefiled.



VII
TEACHING AND LEARNING



VII

TEACHING AND LEARNING*

I SHALL not say much on the vexed question of the extent and nature of the support and the supervision which the State should give to National Education. We are all agreed now that the ideal system is one which would offer to every child, capable of taking advantage of it, an unbroken passage, stage by stage, from the elementary school to the University. That road you may be sure will never be overcrowded : there are few countries which have less reason than this to fear the prospect of rearing and training generations of pedants and prigs. But the malnutrition of the brains of the young —where brains can be found—as a matter of national economy is at least as great a waste as the malnutrition of their bodies.

The last fifty years have seen a growing recognition (though it is still far from universal) of the duty of the State. If the progress actually made could be measured by figures, it would

* From an Address delivered to the City of Oxford Teachers' Association, 5th October, 1923.

seem to be unexampled. In 1869 the State expenditure on Education in England and Wales was less than one million. For last year, 1922-23, if you add together the contributions of the taxes and the rates, it exceeded seventy-five millions. If anyone thinks that that means that we are seventy-five times as well educated now as we were in 1869, I am afraid he is cherishing an illusion.

I am far from saying that the whole of it is well and wisely spent. Just as there are inexcusable gaps in our system for which no provision is made, so there are cases of the worst form of extravagance, which is well-meant but ill-directed and ill-regulated expenditure. Some of it is the almost inevitable result of our dual system of local and central administration. But there are two things in which we cannot afford to make savings : the quality of the teaching, and the adequacy of the apparatus.

The art of teaching is a far rarer faculty or accomplishment—whichever you like to call it—than most people suspect. It ought, of course, to be carefully adapted to the different stages of the educational life. When a young man or woman comes up at eighteen or nineteen from the public school or the secondary school to Oxford, there are things which, if he has not learnt them at school, can never be learnt here. It is a platitude that upon the intellectual side the two

things which most matter in the training of a child are Observation and Memory. Under the old English system, at our public schools, the second was cultivated at the expense of the first. A good memory is of all the secondary mental faculties the most valuable, and there is none of which it is more certain, that if you begin early enough, and in the right way, you can implant it in a child.

I have a fairly good though somewhat patchy memory myself, which I believe I owe entirely to the early days of my schooling.

As Roger Ascham wisely says in "*The Schoolmaster*," "Memory, the only key and keeper of all learning, is readiest to receive and surest to keep any manner of thing that is learned in youth. . . . New wax is best for printing; new clay fittest for working; new shorn wool aptest for even and surest dyeing; new fresh flesh for good and durable salting. And this similitude is not rude nor borrowed of the larder house, but out of his school house of whom the wisest of England need not be ashamed to learn."

But there are memories and memories. One of the most dangerous gifts that the gods can bestow on the new-born infant is the portentous, omnivorous, unleaking memory of such men as Lord Macaulay and Lord Acton. It is far more difficult to evolve a discriminating than a merely

receptive and retentive memory. For myself, while I often wish that I could remember half the things that I have forgotten, I sometimes wish that I could forget nearly half the things that I remember.

Those who are familiar with the history of Education know that for centuries—down to times which some of us can recollect—the schoolmaster's method of creating and improving the memories of his pupils was the frequent and habitual use of the rod.

Being, as I have said, wise before his time, Ascham as far back as the middle of Elizabeth's reign denounced the “cruelty in schoolmasters in beating away the love of learning from children.” His contemporary, the great Lord Burleigh, was one of the few who agreed with him in this opinion. Ascham tells us in the early pages of his book, how at dinner at Windsor in 1563, Mr. Secretary, as he calls him, said : “I have strange news brought me this morning that diverse Scholars of Eton be runne away from the school for fear of beating.” Whereupon Mr. Secretary took occasion to wish that “some more discretion were in many schoolmasters . . . who many times punish rather the weakness of nature than the fault of the Scholar.” For centuries a succession of great headmasters from Udal to Busby and Busby to Keate, were in their day the most hardened practitioners of the art,

which was still in vogue in the early Victorian era.

It is a curious illustration of the rapidity with which deeply-rooted institutions can become obsolete that the habitual use of corporal punishment as a regular instrument of teaching, like the practice of duelling, is now regarded as a barbarous survival.

But I must go back to say two or three words about the cultivation of the other faculty—the faculty of Observation. English education in the past seriously neglected this, which is one of the primary functions of a school. It concerned itself too exclusively with the study of books and the sports of the playground. It is amazing how little children brought up in the country knew of their environment. I myself, whose school-days were passed in the heart of a great city, have often been surprised when playing golf at the ignorance of the boy and girl caddies of the names of quite familiar flowers and birds. I believe that during the last few years—largely owing to the pioneer efforts of the Boy Scouts and the Girl Guides—there has been a marked change for the better.

The best teachers now are keenly alive to the importance of training every child to keep its eyes and ears open to the sights and sounds of its daily life, whether in the country or in the town. That is a task which cannot be fully performed

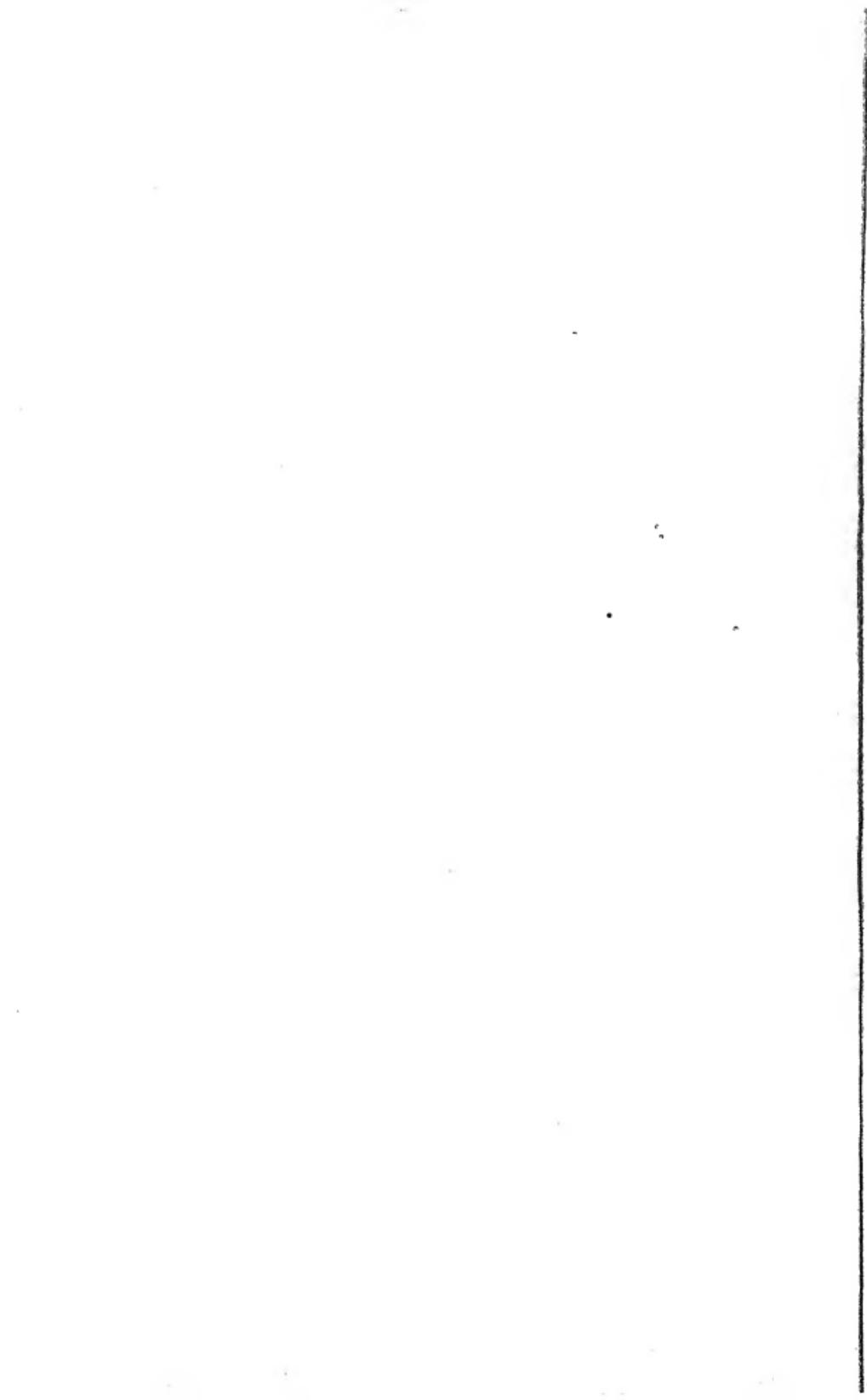
within the boundaries of the class-room and the playground ; it involves going out into the highways and byways, enlisting the interest of the children in what is to be found there, and awaking in them the zest of the explorer for ever fresh discoveries in what is to them a new world.

I read only two or three days ago in one of the papers a vivid account of what can be done on these lines by an expert teacher, Mr. Valentine Bell. The ground over which his experiment had to be carried out was at first sight one of the most unpromising that can be conceived—the Metropolitan Borough of Lambeth. Yet a class of fifty boys, organized in groups, and equipped with maps and compasses and notebooks, had within a short time surveyed the geography, geology, history, architecture, and social and municipal life of the place. “Information gathered,” says Mr. Bell, “was written down during writing lessons, and mounted with post-cards, drawings, maps and photographs, and the whole when finished made a pictorial survey of Lambeth, which, although elementary, became invaluable in teaching.”

There is, in fact, nothing, or there ought to be nothing, inelastic and stereotyped in the art and practice of teaching. Read for example the life recently published of a great and unconventional schoolmaster of our own time—Sanderson of Oundle—which shows that in education there

are always new paths of exploration and experiment.

The teacher has in our time and country a greater function, a more responsible task, and in the long run a larger influence, than the members of any other profession—politicians, clergy, even the journalists themselves. It is true that, unlike many of these, he does not live and bask in the limelight. But with him, more than with any of them, lies the power of moulding the thought and the character of the nation.



VIII
ECONOMIC THEORIZING



VIII

ECONOMIC THEORIZING*

WHEN I came to London, after leaving Oxford, nearly fifty years ago, I joined the Staff of the then newly-formed Society for the Extension of University Teaching, and occupied some of my more than ample leisure in giving courses of lectures on Political Economy. The other day I came by chance across a bundle of the old printed syllabuses, which I used to circulate week by week to my students. I confess I was amazed and humiliated to find how much I have since forgotten. In those days our excursions into the field of Political Economy had what you here would consider a limited and almost a narrow range. We were much concerned with the theories and reasonings of Malthus, Ricardo, and Karl Marx—the three most brilliant and original economic thinkers of the nineteenth century—who, widely as they diverged in their conclusions, had a direct intellectual relationship.

I see that the School has chosen as its motto

* From an Address delivered to the London School of Economics at its first Commemoration, 23rd June, 1922.

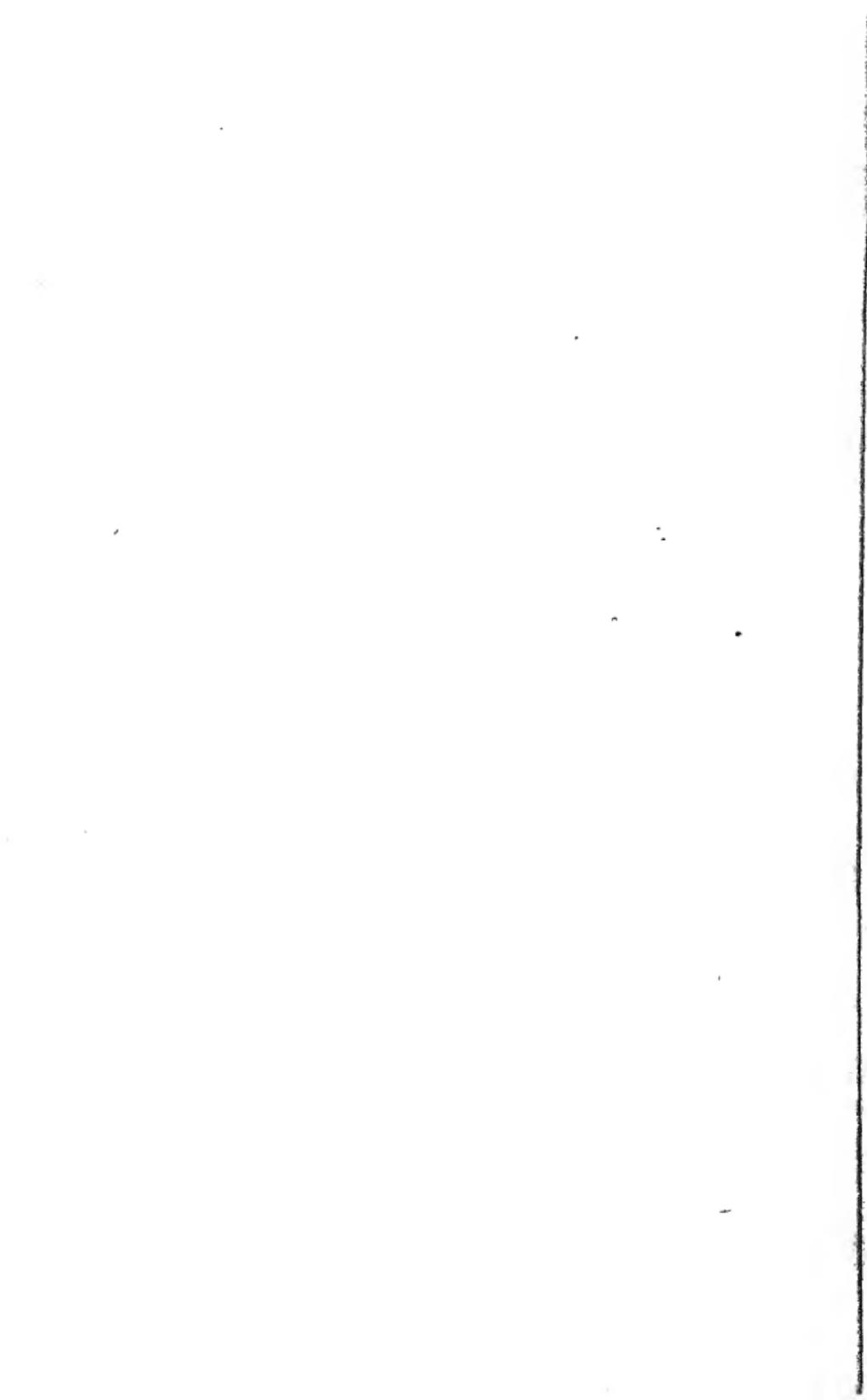
for heraldic purposes : *Rerum Cognoscere Causas* : to get to know the causes of things—words written of Lucretius in admiring envy by Virgil, from a consciousness, real or assumed, of his own incapacity for philosophy and science. They are repeated by Bacon, when he says : “ It is rightly laid down that to know truly is to know by means of causes.” One of the great services rendered by Malthus was to discredit abstractions in the sphere of economic reasoning, and to substitute for them the investigation of what Bacon elsewhere calls “ *true causes*. ” The child of nature of Rousseau, and the economic man of Bentham and James Mill, are both in a large degree creatures of the imagination. Ricardo and Marx, though they both knew a great deal about the concrete facts of business and industry, are also essentially abstract writers. A fallacy lies at the root of much of the theorizing of Sentimentalists, Utilitarians, and Socialists alike : the fallacy that human nature is indefinitely modifiable by extraneous circumstances, artificially produced or imposed. The capacity, and indeed the necessity, for some form of social organization, with both its restraints and its outlets, is as old as man, and is just as fundamental a fact as personality itself. No economic theories are of real value which ignore any of the complex conditions, internal as well as external, which environ human association,

whether in the pursuit of material wealth, or in any other of its multifarious activities. The true cause of this or that phenomenon will often be discovered where you least expected to find it, and presuppositions and abstractions are almost certain to lead you astray.



IX

MODERN BIOGRAPHERS



IX

MODERN BIOGRAPHERS*

MY agreeable duty is to ask you to give, as I am sure you will, your very hearty thanks to both the combatants in this sham fight. They have evidently been lunching together, and so far as I can make out, and I have followed both addresses not only with interest but with close attention, there is no proposition upon which they are at issue. At any rate, so far as I am concerned, I subscribe to everything that has been said by both of them. I hoped we were going to have a real duel with the buttons off the foils. Still, we have heard a great deal, and I am sure we shall carry away quite a number of the things they have said.

I have never written a biography myself, unlike our two distinguished speakers, nor, notwithstanding what Mr. Gardiner has said, do I propose to write an autobiography. I will leave that to other members of my family. Mr. Guedalla pointed out that there is a great

* Summing up after a debate at the London School of Economics between Mr. A. G. Gardiner and Mr. P. Guedalla, June 5th, 1928.

distinction between a biography and an epitaph. Dr. Johnson said—Boswell has recorded it, and it is one of his truest sayings—“ Man is not upon his oath in a lapidary inscription.” When a man is writing a biography he ought to show a certain amount of circumspection and regard for truth. Here comes in a very difficult problem, and it is extremely uncertain how it should be solved. What ought a biography to be ? A photograph, a picture, a caricature or a creation ? Most of the good biographies, if you classify them, are within one or other of these categories. But the best and clearly the best, the only ones which have a title to immortality, are not creations like, for instance, Carlyle’s life of Sterling ; certainly not caricatures like—well, I won’t say ; still less photographs—there is nothing so dull as a photograph ; but pictures—the picture of an artist who has studied and loves his subject, and brings to the delineation of it not only accuracy of memory, not only truth of presentation, but that imaginative insight which distinguishes a mere chronicle or record from a living biography of a person. It is for that reason that Boswell stands in the supreme position, which he still holds, and from which he will never be displaced among the biographers of the world.

I will venture just to put in a momentary demurrer on my own modest account, to an

incidental remark of Mr. Gardiner. I am not sure that I agree with him that he has Johnson on his side in saying that an autobiography is to be preferred to a biography by a third person. Autobiography is, of course, a marvellous chapter in literature. Augustine, Rousseau, Cellini, Caesar; and here in England, we have Gibbon and Benjamin Haydon. These are illustrations of what a very fine standard of literary art autobiography can reach. It is, however, always liable to certain inherent limitations. The writer is self-conscious, more or less gazing in the looking-glass to get a portraiture of his or her own features, and is therefore liable to be egotistic and self-conscious. It is also extremely difficult in autobiography to tell the truth, or, at any rate, the whole truth. Biography ought not to be subject to these temptations. I think we here in England, in our own literature, may claim in biography to have produced the great masterpieces of the world—Boswell's "*Life of Johnson*," Lockhart's "*Life of Scott*," and a book I put side by side with both of these, certainly in the same class, Sir George Trevelyan's "*Life of Macaulay*."

A favourite saying of that great artist, an old friend of mine, Sir Edward Burne-Jones, was that we ought to praise Allah for the diversity of his creatures. But I confess that I agree most strongly with Mr. Guedalla that the multiplication

of biographies is one of the growing evils of our time. There are far too many of them and they are far too long. Just take the Victorian statesmen. When Mr. Guedalla was speaking I jotted down from memory a list of those whose biographies have been given to the world — Gladstone, in three volumes ; Beaconsfield, in six volumes ; Lord Granville, in two volumes ; the Duke of Devonshire, in two volumes ; Lord Clarendon, in two volumes ; Lord Salisbury, in two, with the promise of at least two more ; the Duke of Argyll, in two volumes ; the Marquess of Ripon, in two volumes ; Sir Charles Dilke, in two volumes ; Lord Lytton, in two volumes ; and happily we have had a recent accession in the shape of a life of Sir William Harcourt which, I think, does not exceed two. A further instalment, to which we are all looking forward with the greatest interest, will be Mr. Spender's biography of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, in two volumes. I had forgotten Mr. Garvin's "*Chamberlain*" ; if it goes within six or eight volumes, we shall get off very well.

I do not know whether you have read all these ; I have read all that have seen the light ; and with different degrees of detail, and very different degrees of literary skill, you will find the same story told. I have read, I think, at least twelve accounts of the Home Rule struggle ; I have read certainly twelve accounts of General Gordon,

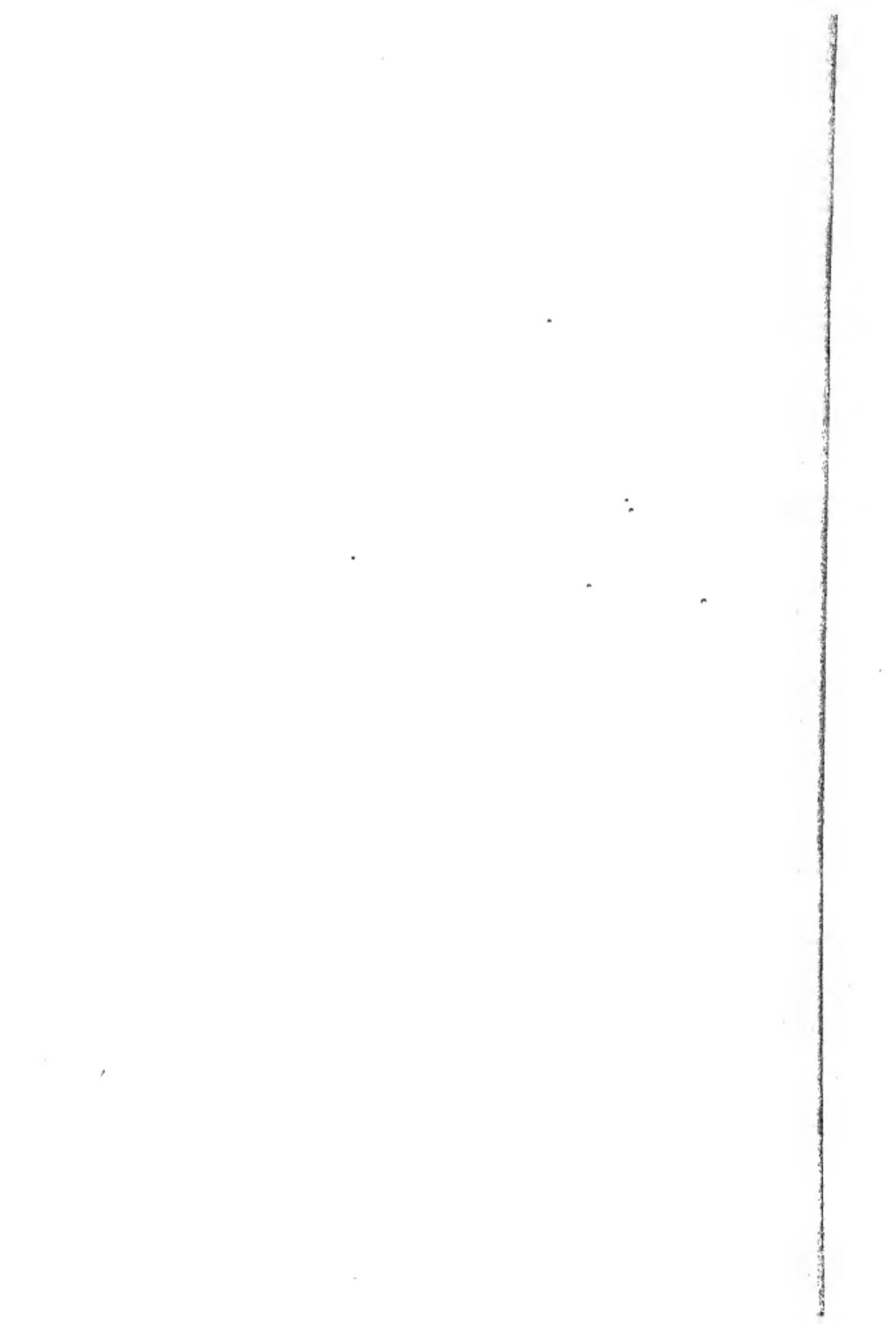
Egypt and the Sudan ; I have read I do not know how many accounts of the struggle for the enlargement of the franchise, and the other reforms of the Middle Victorian period ; and you cannot introduce, no human art can introduce, much variety in the narrative of the same series of events. If only the writers could have had a clearing-house. Home Rule, the franchise, Egypt, the Franco-Prussian war, whatever it may be—why not have a great chapter about that ? and then devote the rest of the book to what really interests the world, the personality of the man you are endeavouring to depict and perpetuate for posterity ? The output would be immeasurably less, but the instruction of the world would have been improved.

I do not know whether there are any intending biographers here. As for Mr. Guedalla, I will venture to say to him that his admirable book on the Second Empire does not err in any way in these particulars. It is short, terse, and, I need not say, brilliant, and it does not cover ground that has been travelled a hundred times before. But if there are any intending biographers here—the temptation seems to be very great—let me give them a final word of counsel. Get rid in your narrative of all the common material of contemporary history which is not in any way specially connected with, or

appropriate to, the man or woman you are attempting to describe, and concentrate yourself on delineating the figure of the man you are endeavouring to recall to life.

X

THE "ANTIGONE"



X

THE "ANTIGONE"**

"How the cothurns trod majestic
Down the deep iambic lines,
And the rolling anapaestic
Curled like vapour over shrines."

THESE lines, from Mrs. Browning's once famous poem, "Wine of Cyprus," came into one's mind, as the chorus of white-bearded Theban elders, at the end of the prologue between Antigone and Ismene, made their stately circuit round the altar in the orchestra of the Greek Theatre at Bradfield College.

Of the surviving plays of Sophocles—only seven out of more than one hundred—the *Antigone* is in date of composition (441 B.C.), either the first or the second. According to the chronology of the Oedipus legend, it ought to have been the third piece in a trilogy, of which the *Oedipus Tyrannus* (much later, but of uncertain date) should have been the first, and the *Oedipus Coloneus* (produced forty years later than the *Antigone*, and probably after the poet's death) the second. To understand the opening of the

* *Review of Reviews*, 15th July, 1922.

drama and its subsequent development, it is necessary to recall that Oedipus, King of Thebes, left two sons, Eteocles and Polynices, and that Polynices, driven out of the succession by his brother, had put himself at the head of a band of invaders from Argos, to procure his own restoration. Antigone and Ismene, daughters of Oedipus, and sisters of their rival brothers, had remained in Thebes. The expedition of the "Seven Against Thebes" under the leadership of Polynices was repulsed and the two brothers perished in a fratricidal duel. The corpse of Eteocles, the successful defender of Thebes, had been buried with all the accustomed ritual. The corpse of Polynices lay unburied. By the death of the brothers, Creon (their uncle) becomes by succession King of Thebes. There are two things to note and keep in mind before the play begins. (1) Burial in the legendary era of Greece, to be complete in ritual, appears to have involved three stages : (i.) Washing the corpse, and libations ; (ii.) burning it ; and (iii.) when the ashes were collected, if possible in a sepulchral urn, digging and raising for their final receptacle a covering mound. If for the moment the whole process was impossible, the dead body might be provisionally sprinkled with dust, to prevent it being mangled by dogs and birds of prey.

(2) This was the mechanical side of burial. But far more important was its religious aspect.

To leave a dead enemy (let alone a kinsman or friend) unburied, shocked beyond measure the conventional conscience of Hellas. The maltreatment of the dead Hector by Achilles caused the intervention of the Gods. As Jebb reminds us, the Athenians buried the Persians slain at Marathon, and even the Persians buried the dead Spartans at Thermopylae. It was never forgiven to Lysander that he left unburied the Athenians who fell at Aegospotami.

Bearing all this in mind, let us take the story as it is presented in Professor Norwood's terse summary of the plot of the *Antigone*.*

"The scene is laid before the palace at Thebes, on the morning after the repulse of the Argives, who had come to restore Polynices. Creon (the new king) publishes an edict that no one shall give burial to Polynices on pain of death. Antigone, sister of the dead man, despite the advice of her sister Ismene performs the rite† and is haled before Creon. She insists that his edict cannot annul the unwritten primeval laws of Heaven. The King, disregarding the admonition of his son Haemon, betrothed to Antigone, sends her to the Cave of death. The prophet Tiresias warns him that the gods are angered by the pollution which comes from the unburied corpse. Urged by the Chorus, Creon relents, and hastens

* Greek Tragedy (Methuen), p. 137.

† i.e., scatters dust over the corpse.

first to bury Polynices, then to release Antigone, who has, however, already hanged herself. Haemon stabs himself by her body. On hearing of his death, his mother, Eurydice, wife of Creon, commits suicide. The play ends with Creon's helpless grief."

The *Antigone* stands alone among the surviving work of Sophocles, in being what in modern phraseology is called a "problem play." The central theme, the conflict between the duty of obedience to conscience and the "unwritten law" and the duty of obedience to the law of the State—is as real to-day, and often as difficult to deal with, as it was in the time of the Athens of Pericles. Antigone takes one side: Creon the other: both in the end were heavily punished. Antigone commits suicide; the same fate befalls Creon's wife and son. The modern judgment sides strongly with Antigone. But was that the verdict which Sophocles intended to suggest, and which would be approved by the twenty thousand or so Athenians who made up the audience? The question has given rise to some of the keenest dialectic in the history of criticism. On the one side there are those who think that Sophocles meant to do even justice to both points of view, and that against Creon's violence must be set Antigone's stubborn self-will.* This was the opinion of no less an authority than Hegel

* αὐτόγνωτος ὄργα (v. 675).

(quoted in Jebb's introduction) :—most characteristic, both in substance and expression, of that illustrious philosopher : “In the view of the Eternal Justice both were wrong, because they were one-sided ; but at the same time, both were right.” But Jebb will undoubtedly carry conviction with most readers, in the subtle and cogent argument by which he seeks to demonstrate that our sympathies are intended, when the climax of the play is reached, to be wholeheartedly with Antigone.

Upon this, the main problem, there is nothing new to be said, but there are one or two subsidiary points which are of interest to students of the ancient world.

There is a strong political undercurrent in the drama. One cannot indeed help suspecting, now and again, that Sophocles was playing to the Athenian gallery. We know that in fact the poet was in the next year (442 B.C.) elected one of the Ten Generals, and took part as such in an expedition against Samos : and the tradition is that he owed his appointment to the success of the *Antigone*. There is throughout the play a constant implied contrast between despot-ridden Thebes and free Athens. The Chorus of local Theban Magnates imagine that they have been summoned by the new king to a special council—the term (*σύγκλητος*) being applied at Athens to meetings of the Ecclesia convoked to deal with some matter of emergency.

Creon soon undeceives them. He informs them that in the exercise of his undoubted prerogative, he has issued the edict which forbids the burial of Polynices. Their business is not to discuss or criticize, but simply to avoid connivance with any who may be tempted to disobey. The Chorus—with the servile acquiescence which an Athenian would expect in a City under the yoke of despotic rule—meekly assent : “it is for thee to give thy orders, both for the dead and the living.” There is a coarse strain in the typical despot, Creon, who is always suspecting that any opposition to his will must be due to some form of bribery. When the Guard—“a country bumpkin,” as an acute critic has said, with almost a Shakespearian touch about him—has at last made an end of his tale of the finding of the corpse sprinkled with dust, the Chorus timidly suggests that this may be the work of the Gods (*θεῆλατον*, v. 278). Creon curses them as fools and dotards ; and, in a long tirade, declares that the doer must have been paid by the disaffected in the City. Even when the venerable soothsayer, Tiresias, comes later on to warn and threaten him, he is bold enough at first to insinuate the same charge, in the insolent words : “The prophet-tribe was ever fond of money.”

The most remarkable illustration of this feature in the play is the dialogue between Creon and

his son Haemon, the betrothed of Antigone, for whom he comes to plead (v. 631-780)—but not on personal grounds: “No marriage (says the dutiful son) shall be deemed by me a greater gain than thy good guidance.” Creon proceeds to deliver him a long lecture, in the true tyrant’s vein, on the supreme duty of obedience ($\pi\epsilon\theta\alpha\rho\chi\iota\alpha$) to the head, whether of a household or a State. “We must support the cause of order, and not be worsted by a woman.” Haemon’s reply is, in effect, that public opinion in the City is wholly on the side of Antigone, and that it is Creon’s own interest, as despot, to revoke the sentence. Creon angrily asks: “Shall Thebes prescribe to me how I must rule?” and Haemon replies, in the famous line, which sums up the creed of Athenian democracy: “That is no *City* ($\pi\circ\lambda\iota\epsilon$) which belongs to one man.” Haemon (it has been well said) pleads with his father as a democrat and not as a lover. It is only when he finds Creon inexorable that his passion breaks through, and he rushes off the stage declaring that he will kill himself. It is this which prompts the Chorus to the marvellous Ode on the unconquerableness of Love: perhaps the only choral Ode in the play which has any direct relevance to what is going on. The others, fine as some of them are, are patchwork relics of the conventional dithyramb.

That Haemon loved Antigone is thus made

plain, but did Antigone love Haemon ? If she did (and I will in a moment discuss the only evidence which the play affords) her love for him did not affect the resolve which led her to dare Creon, and to meet her doom. In a sense, love was her motive. She would never have risked the penalties of disobeying Creon's ordinance, for an unburied stranger. If the corpse of Polynices had been that of any other of the gallant Argive invaders, she would, in face of Creon's edict, have remained passive, and (as Hegel seems to think she ought to have done in any case) left the situation to the Gods. Quite early in the Prologue she discloses her real motive to Ismene : "I shall rest, a loved one, with him (my brother) whom I have loved, sinless in my crime" (*ὅσια πανουργήσασα*); or, as she says in almost her last words, "by piety (*εὐσεβοῦσ*), (*i.e.*, to my dead brother), I have earned the name of impious" (*δυσσεβης*, v. 924).

Where then does her love for Haemon come in ? My answer is—Nowhere. I believe Sophocles rightly left it out of the case. Antigone is by no means a flawless sentimental heroine. In both her dialogues with Ismene, she becomes at moments hard and even virulent. What evidence is there that Sophocles intended to suggest that any personal feeling for Haemon entered into her thoughts ?

Here I write with diffidence : for I am forced into reluctant disagreement with that supreme scholar and most accomplished critic, Sir Richard Jebb.

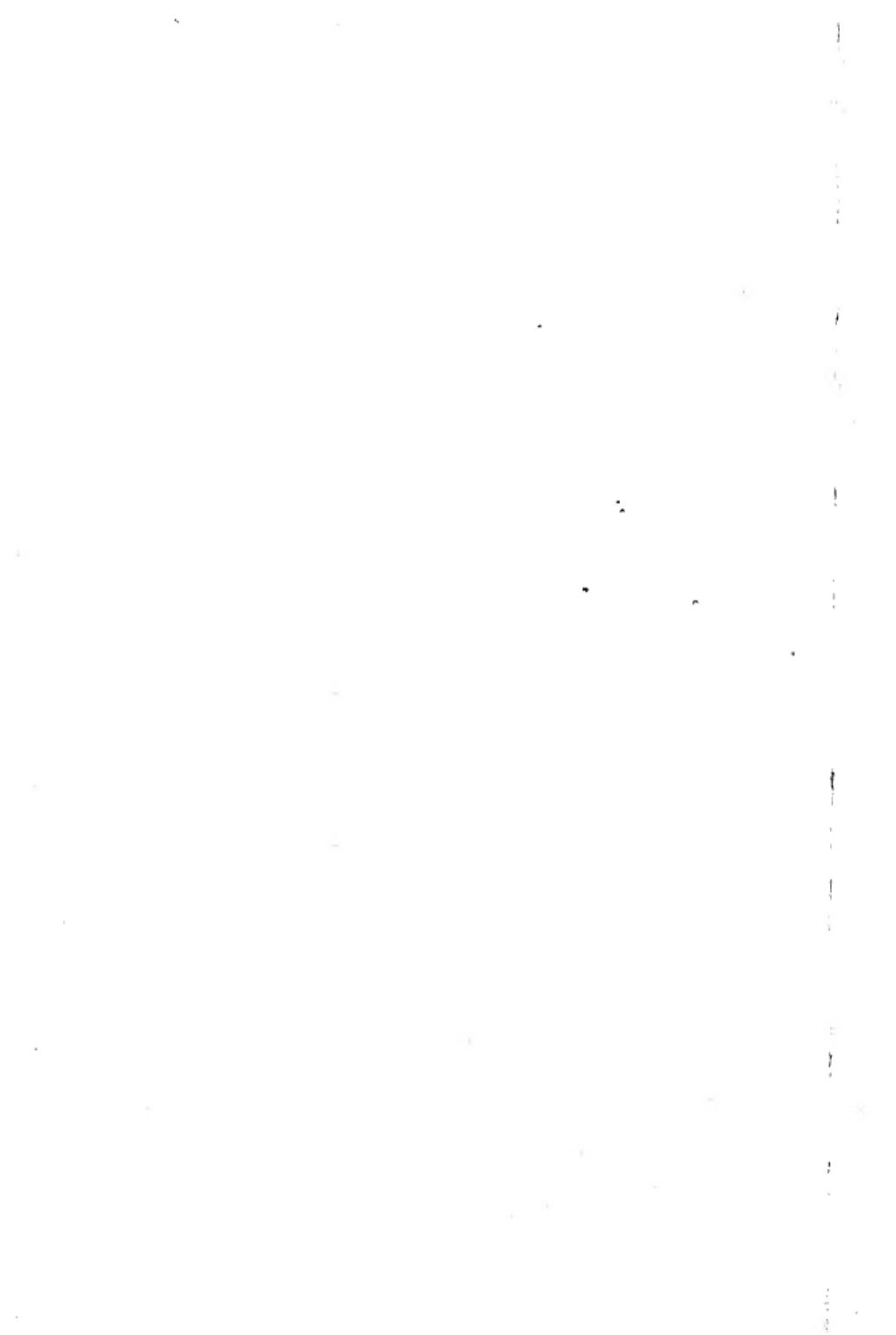
Ismene, having tardily but heroically associated herself with her sister when Antigone's "holy crime" had been discovered, in her pleading with Creon for the first time introduces Haemon's name (v. 568), "But wilt thou slay the betrothed of thy own son ?" Creon (after a brutal interposition) replies, "I like not an evil wife for my son." Then follows the line, "Haemon, beloved. How thy father wrongs thee !" which is given by all the MSS. to Ismene. But the modern Editors' trampling on this uniform reading, have, for purely psychological reasons, transferred it to Antigone, who, for the first and last and only time in the play, is made by them to confess her love for Haemon. To my mind the MSS. are evidently right, and the Editors are wrong. The transference (so it seems to me) does injustice to the art of Sophocles. When at last Antigone is led forth to her doom, there is something quite impersonal in her lament that she goes to the grave unwedded (v. 876-943). This is especially marked in the most moving of her farewell speeches : "O tomb, O bridal chamber" (v. 891). Her last words are : "See what I suffer, and from whom ; the champion of piety" (*εὐσέβεια*, v. 943).

It remains to say a word of the production of this most moving of all the ancient tragedies in the Greek Amphitheatre at Bradfield College. There is really only one thing to be said : it was in all respects admirable. The conditions were unfavourable, as a pelting, pitiless rain poured down through the whole performance both upon Chorus and audience. But the rain made little if any difference to our enjoyment. The Chorus, upon whom so much depends, were well dressed and drilled, and their leader spoke his lines with excellent elocution. The music had a quiet, dignified, unobtrusive monotony, which never jarred, and was always appropriate to the spoken word. The actors were word perfect ; and Creon (the most difficult part) was on the whole the best played. The most impressive moment perhaps was the bringing in of the shrouded corpse of Haemon escorted by four Guards, and followed by the stricken father. Then came the climax, when the Eccyclema discloses also the body of the dead Eurydice, and we hear Creon's despairing cry : "Let it come : my last day : that I may never look upon tomorrow's light."

The warmest congratulations are due to the Headmaster and his staff, and not less to the boys, who played their parts so well in a production which will always live in the memories of those who were privileged to see it.

XI

THE ART OF TACITUS



XI

THE ART OF TACITUS*

AN English scholar can hardly undertake a more arduous enterprise than the translation of the "Annals of Tacitus." The task stands quite by itself, and is encumbered with difficulties peculiarly its own. The text is, it is true, on the whole, trustworthy and well settled, the *loci desperati* are far inferior in number and complexity to those which throng the pages of Thucydides, and the student cannot desire more competent guides through the intricacies of a classic than Orelli and Nipperdey. The difficulty is not to reproduce what Tacitus says, but the way in which he says it. He is not oppressed, like the best of the Greeks, with the inadequacy of set forms of speech to express new thoughts; on the contrary, like all great satirists, he takes a conventional view of things, and it is probable that few authors have produced so vivid and lasting an impression with so small a stock of original ideas. Nor, again, has his

* *Spectator*, 11th March, 1876.

style any of the unconscious grace, the delicate and unpremeditated subtleties, which fill with despair the translator of Plato or Catullus. All his effects are nicely calculated, his moral indignation is never riotous or diffuse, and he brands a character or blasts a reputation with the stately and official malevolence of a Republican Censor.

But though he is in a sense the most artificial of writers, though his tricks of style are transparent, and his mannerisms inveterate and obtrusive, though, in a word, he exhibits in their most striking form many of the most vicious characteristics of the Silver Age, he yet handles the Latin language in a manner and with an effect entirely beyond the reach of his contemporaries. His work is not a mosaic of epigrams, like that of Statius, nor a torrent of rhetoric, like that of Juvenal. He never wastes an epithet nor dilutes a paragraph, never turns aside from his main theme to make an irrelevant point, never suggests the idea (to borrow the words of an accomplished critic in another connection) of "a miniature-painter engaged on a great historical picture."

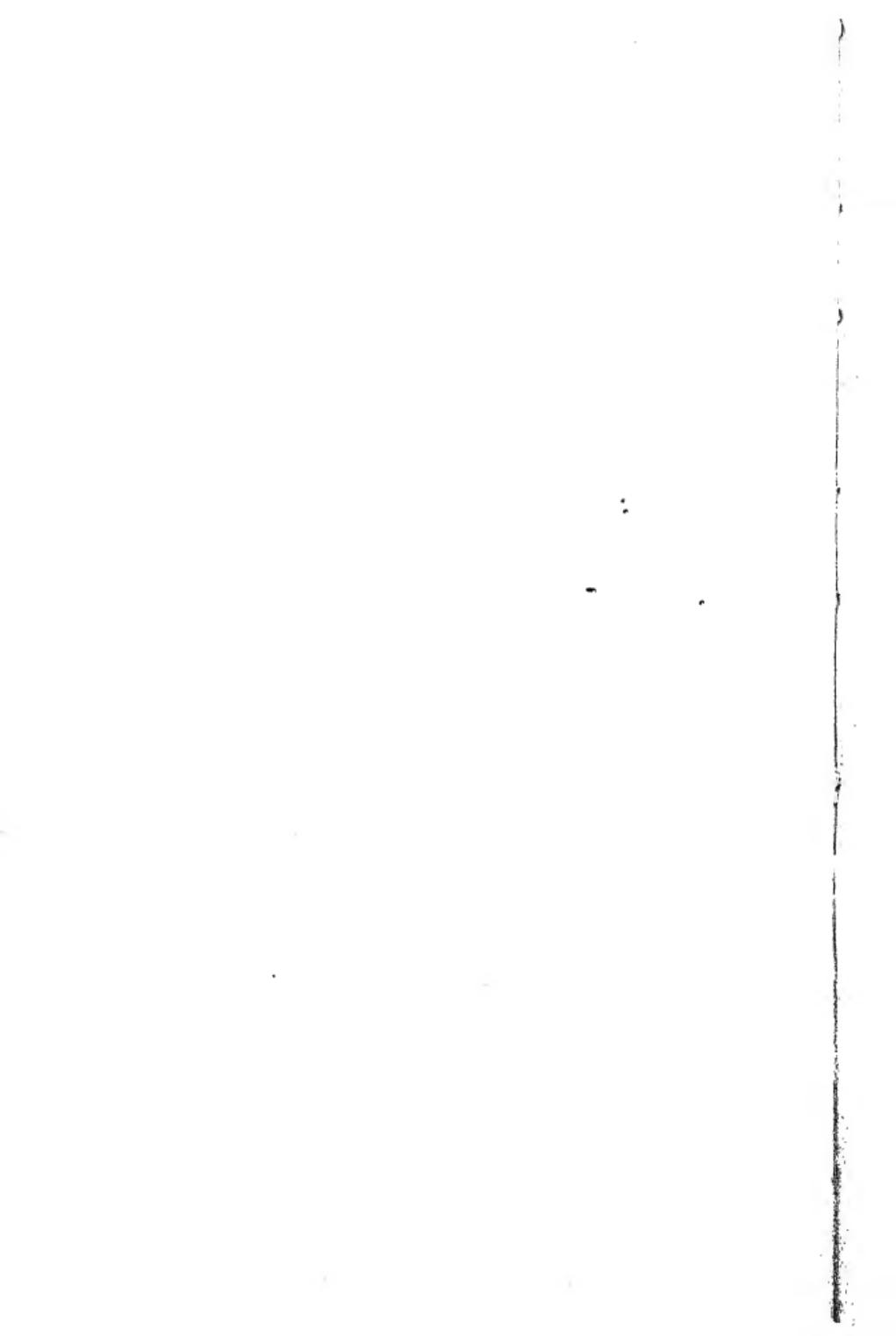
If we attempt to analyse the secret of his success, it is more easy to say what he does not do than what he does. But the truth appears to be that Tacitus alone among the writers of his time had the eye and hand of a literary artist,

and knew how to produce that kind of illusion which requires for its creation imaginative no less than intellectual power. He is second to none of them as a phrasemonger and epigrammatist, but he possesses at the same time a faculty which they are one and all without—the sense of proportion to which a distorted perspective is an eye-sore, and the creative instinct which elaborates and adapts the details of a picture with reference to a single purpose and a central figure. It is this which gives to the staple of his work so permanent and engrossing an interest. Were the style less skilfully managed, we should be alternately wearied and irritated by the writer's spurious Republicanism, his Stoic platitudes, his aristocratic bile; by the perversity which leads him to confuse the extinction of an oligarchy with the death of freedom, by his unique proficiency in all the arts which are taught and learned in the school for scandal. That he never produces such an effect upon the mind of the reader, at least at the first perusal, is wholly due to his peculiar literary art. There is a dramatic unity and completeness in his work which makes each scene necessary to the whole, and the dexterity with which the several parts are adjusted and balanced allows no opportunity for the criticism which any one of them by itself would provoke. The description of character and policy, the

analysis of motives, and the illustration of general laws all go on together, and so well are they combined, that it is almost impossible to rise from the book without the persuasion that Tiberius was a villain, Germanicus a hero of the antique type, and the organized tyranny and extortion of the old senatorial rule an ideal machinery for the production of public virtue.

XII

THE AGE OF DEMOSTHENES



XII

THE AGE OF DEMOSTHENES*

IT is not easy to realize distinctly the nature of the political problems which presented themselves to an Athenian statesman of the fourth century before Christ, and yet, complex as they are, they must be clearly conceived and steadily kept in view, if we would do justice either to Demosthenes or to his leading opponents. Over and above the difficulty which besets every attempt to express ancient ideas in modern terms, there is in this case need for additional caution, arising, in part, from the character of our chief authorities for the period, and still more from our own prepossessions. Contemporary rhetoric is in some respects the worst material for history, and as we try to balance the conflicting statements of the rival orators, and to evolve out of the chaos of contradictions and recriminations the actual form and body of the time, we sigh in vain for a Thucydides, or even a Xenophon. There is,

* *Spectator*, 3rd March, 1877.

unfortunately, no reason to suppose that Demosthenes himself, high as he towers above all his contemporaries, was at all superior to the rhetorical vice of over-colouring for party purposes, and there are obvious inconsistencies in the accounts which he gives at different times of the same persons and events. But the task of getting at the truth is rendered still more arduous by our constant liability to be misled through associations derived from an earlier and more splendid epoch in Grecian history. The memories which naturally suggest themselves at the mention of names like Athens, Sparta, and Thebes are the memories of the Persian invasion, of the age of Pericles, and of the Peloponnesian War. The fact is that, whether we regard its external dangers or its inner civic life, the Greece of the fourth century B.C. was as unlike the Greece of the fifth century as the England of to-day is unlike the England of Mr. Pitt and the French war. Fear of the Great King and his designs of ambition or revenge was no longer a powerful factor in Greek politics. A doctrinaire politician like Isocrates might still preach a Pan-Hellenic crusade against the traditional enemy, but the spasmodic Persophobia (if we may use the phrase) which his pamphlets aroused, and which the interested agents of Philip probably kept alive, had no more influence with the practical statesmen of the time, than the occasional

outbursts of a like sentiment in reference to France have had in our own country within our own memory. Persia, the only Power whose aggression could have aroused the imaginative side of Greek patriotism, and absorbed in a national movement of self-defence the petty jealousies of the States, was no longer a formidable foe, and the liberties of Greece were menaced from a quarter which seemed at once too familiar and too insignificant to justify suspicion or alarm.

The semi-barbarous kingdom of Macedonia, after several fitful attempts to take a place and play a part in the Hellenic economy, had, under Amyntas, the father, and Perdiccas, the brother of Philip, become a prey to its savage neighbours, and all but ceased to exist. When Philip himself ascended the throne, there was nothing either in the past history or the present condition of the disorganized tribe over which he exercised an almost nominal supremacy, to excite the fears of the cultured and well-ordered cities which had for more than a century competed for the hegemony of Greece. The early years of Philip's reign were employed in establishing his authority at home, and in perfecting the "military instrument," to which, like the Prussian statesmen of the present century, he looked for the accomplishment of his far-reaching schemes. It is true that almost from the first

he set to work to gain a footing for himself in Thrace, and to undermine the traditional influence of Athens in the outlying quarters of the Hellenic world, but it was not till, after seven years of cautious encroachment, he boldly intervened in the Sacred War, and made himself master of Thessaly, that even Demosthenes began to suspect the ultimate aims of his ambitious policy. From this point onwards the nature of his designs is so clear to the modern student of history, that it is hard to understand how they could have been hidden from the eyes of his contemporaries. The next twelve years are occupied with the gradual development of a scheme of patient, consistent and continuous aggression. The conquest of Olynthus and Chalcidice is rapidly succeeded by the ruin of Phocis, and at last the fatal blindness of the Amphictyonic Council, and the decisive victory of Chaeronea, only hastened a consummation which had long been inevitable.

Throughout this period, Demosthenes stands out among the men of his day as the one steady opponent of Macedonian policy, and our estimate of his statesmanship must therefore depend upon the answer which we give to two questions—first, were the liberties of Greece, as he conceived them, and as they existed in his time, worth preserving? and second, was their preservation possible?

The first of these questions appears to us by no means so superfluous as it is generally assumed to be. "Freedom" is a misleading and often a question-begging term, and nowhere is it used to cover so large a variety of confused and contradictory meanings as in the pages of Greek historians and orators. The simple enthusiasm for liberty which brightens the narrative of Herodotus is a very different sentiment from the spirit of democratic propagandism with which it is often confounded in the rhetorical utterances ascribed by Thucydides to the Athenian speakers of the era of the Peloponnesian War. But in the age of Demosthenes the word, and the thing which it represents, had reached a further stage of degradation, which cannot be properly understood except by reference to the altered circumstances of the time. Free institutions are only valuable as means to an end, and in the celebrated oration which Thucydides puts into the mouth of Pericles, this truth is clearly grasped by the speaker, who finds the peculiar glory of the Athenian Constitution in the many-sided type of character which it developed, and in the generous and imperial policy which it encouraged. Nor was this a mere rhetorical boast. At the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, Athens had passed her prime, and already began to exhibit some of the symptoms of degeneracy. The self-forgetful enthusiasm, which had led

her people to dare and suffer so much for Greece half a century before, had given place to an aggressive and overbearing temper, and the new culture, if it had summoned into life the latent powers of the Athenian mind, had at the same time corrupted its simplicity. Nevertheless, when we compare Athens at this period with her rivals, we cannot hesitate to declare that the principles of free government, as understood and practised by her statesmen, were justified by their results. The Athenian citizen lived in a more enervating atmosphere than that in which the heroes of Marathon were reared, but culture and prosperity had not destroyed in him the springs of action, and he was neither too effeminate for the rough work of the assembly and the battlefield, nor too absorbed in his own city to be indifferent to the larger claims of his country and his race.

But three-quarters of a century later a change had taken place, of the nature and extent of which we have the best evidence in the speeches of Demosthenes himself. The occasional sketches of the Athens of his day with which he points his invectives against the ignominious lethargy of his fellow-countrymen seem like a malicious caricature of the glowing picture of Pericles. They show us a people among whom free institutions have run to seed, and who have reached that state of settled insensibility to the duties

and responsibilities of corporate life which is perhaps more perilous, because less curable, than one of actual anarchy. Politics are handed over to a professional class of experts, and are no more the common interest of all. Public life itself is specialized into a number of separate departments—one set of men do the fighting, another set the talking, others, again, intrigue and pull the wires in the interest of foreign Powers; while the mass of the people sit by, and are bored or amused, applaud or hiss, like the spectators in a theatre whom the play occasionally excites to an artificial and disinterested sympathy. It is no longer the fashion to contribute freely and splendidly to the service of the State; the duties of the trierarchy, which used to arouse an honourable rivalry among the rich, are habitually evaded or jobbed; the humbler ranks in the army and navy, which were once composed of the less wealthy citizens, are now filled up with mercenaries; and every attempt to add to the effective resources of the city, whether by the imposition of a property-tax or by the diversion of the Theoric Fund, is sure to encounter the opposition of either the rich or the poor, or both, in the exact proportion in which their respective comforts or luxuries are menaced. In short, to the contemporaries and fellow-citizens of Demosthenes, patriotism was unintelligible and public spirit

unknown, and the rival cliques who made a profit out of the game of politics were so notoriously and systematically venal, that even the name of the great orator himself—by universal admission, the purest and most unselfish statesman of the age—cannot be cleared from a dark shadow of suspicion. If this is, as we believe it to be, a substantially accurate account of the state of Athens in the fourth century, and if, as we also believe, Athens was not only the freest State in Greece, but the most energetic in its opposition to Philip, may it not be that many unnecessary tears have been wept, and many superfluous sighs have been sighed, over “that dishonest victory at Chaeronea, fatal to liberty ? ”

But even assuming, as Demosthenes assumed, that Greek freedom was yet worth fighting for, and that a system of small, autonomous States was in any case preferable to the paralysing supremacy of a universal monarchy, we have still to meet the further question—where were the materials for an organized resistance ? The Peloponnesian War destroyed the Athenian Empire, without substituting for it any new centre of authority or bond of union. Sparta was, of all the leading Greek cities, the least fitted by her traditions and her political principles for the duties of hegemony, and during the twenty years of her disastrous ascendancy she

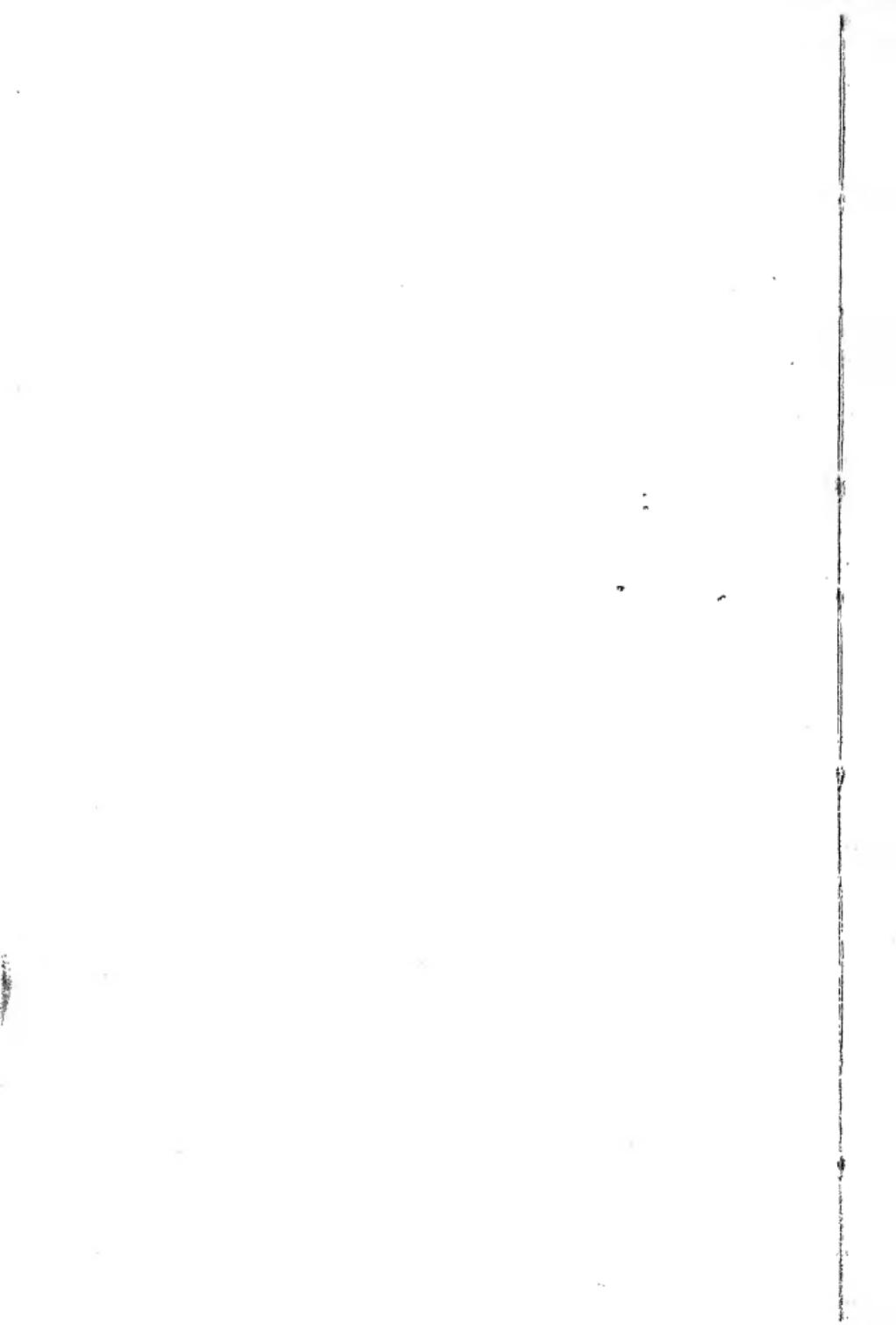
left nothing undone that the fatuity of the most wrong-headed statesman could have devised to hasten the decay of the Panhellenic sentiment. The battle of Leuctra gave a death-blow to the power of Sparta, which fell beyond hope of recovery, and for a time it seemed as though the genius of Epaminondas would unite the northern and southern States in a compact confederacy, with Thebes for its centre. But the life-work of this great statesman hardly survived its creator, and the temporary rejuvenescence of Athens which followed was from the beginning hollow and unreal, and was soon cut short by the Social War. Thus at the moment when Philip began his active career, the States of Greece were never more impotent as individuals, or more disunited as a whole.

It is to the credit of Demosthenes that he perceived from the first this fatal flaw, and that throughout his career he lost no opportunity of insisting on the necessity of union. Again and again, on behalf of Megalopolis, of Olynthus, of Phocis, he urged his short-sighted fellow-citizens to submit, in the interest of Athens itself, to the temporary sacrifices involved in a generous and self-forgetful policy. Had his counsels been followed, the era of free Greece might have closed not in ignominy and disgrace, but in the noble spectacle of a heroic death. But the end, though it might have been

dignified, and even delayed, could not have been averted. The policy of Demosthenes was, after all, a policy of expedients, and when he recalled the inspiring memories of the Persian invasion and the Peloponnesian War, he exhausted all the resources of his matchless eloquence in appeals to a sentiment which, if it were not altogether dead, had at best but an artificial life. It was vain to urge this combination or that, when the absence of any possible head and of any durable basis of union doomed all imaginable combinations to ultimate futility. It was equally vain to preach a crusade in the ears of men who had no faith in the cause for which they were called upon to sacrifice what they really valued and enjoyed, and whose degenerate ideas of liberty were in nowise outraged by the considerate rule of a Macedonian governor. There are few figures in history which have a better title to our respectful sympathy than that of Demosthenes, "fallen on evil days and evil tongues," and confronting with a noble enthusiasm which nothing could damp or dim the indifference of an age which was not worthy of him. That he was the apostle of a cause already lost is no derogation from his greatness, and need not qualify our admiration of his character and purposes, for the failures of such men are more instructive than the petty triumphs of successful ambition.

XIII

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN



XIII

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN*

THE PRIME MINISTER (Mr. Asquith): I beg to move “That this House do now adjourn.”

We have, Sir, to-day to mourn yet another gap in our ranks, which is not the less marked or the less felt because he who filled it has for some time past been withdrawn, through no fault of his own, from the fighting line. Mr. Chamberlain was for thirty years in the forefront of our Parliamentary life. That he never held the title of Leader of this House or of the Head of the Government is felt, by friends and by foes alike, to be an accident in his career. During the whole of that time his name is, and will be, imperishably associated with all our great public controversies. He would never, in any circumstances, have incurred the penalty which the ancient law-giver imposed upon the citizen who refused to take sides on the occasion of civil strife. Neutrality was impossible to a

* Speech delivered in the House of Commons, 6th July, 1914.

man of his temperament and of his convictions. To the arena of our political conflicts here Mr. Chamberlain brought, not only a combination of most unusual gifts, but, what is rarer still, a new type of personality. When he entered this House in the year 1876 almost all the places of authority, both in the Legislature and in successive Administrations, were still held by men who had received their Parliamentary training in the era of a restricted suffrage. Mr. Chamberlain was the pioneer of a new generation. He brought with him from the world of business and of municipal life a freshness of outlook, a directness of purpose, and a certain impatience of conventional and circuitous methods. He may be said with truth to have introduced and perfected a new style of speaking, equally removed from that of either of the great masters of speech who then had the ear of the House and the nation—Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright. If he kept, as a rule, closer to the ground, he rarely digressed, and he never lost his way. He had, indeed, at his disposal all the resources, natural and acquired, of an accomplished artist, not excluding raillery, sarcasm, invective. But more perhaps—so at least it seems to me—than any orator of our time, he gave the impression of complete and serene command both of his material and of himself.

As has been the case with not a few great

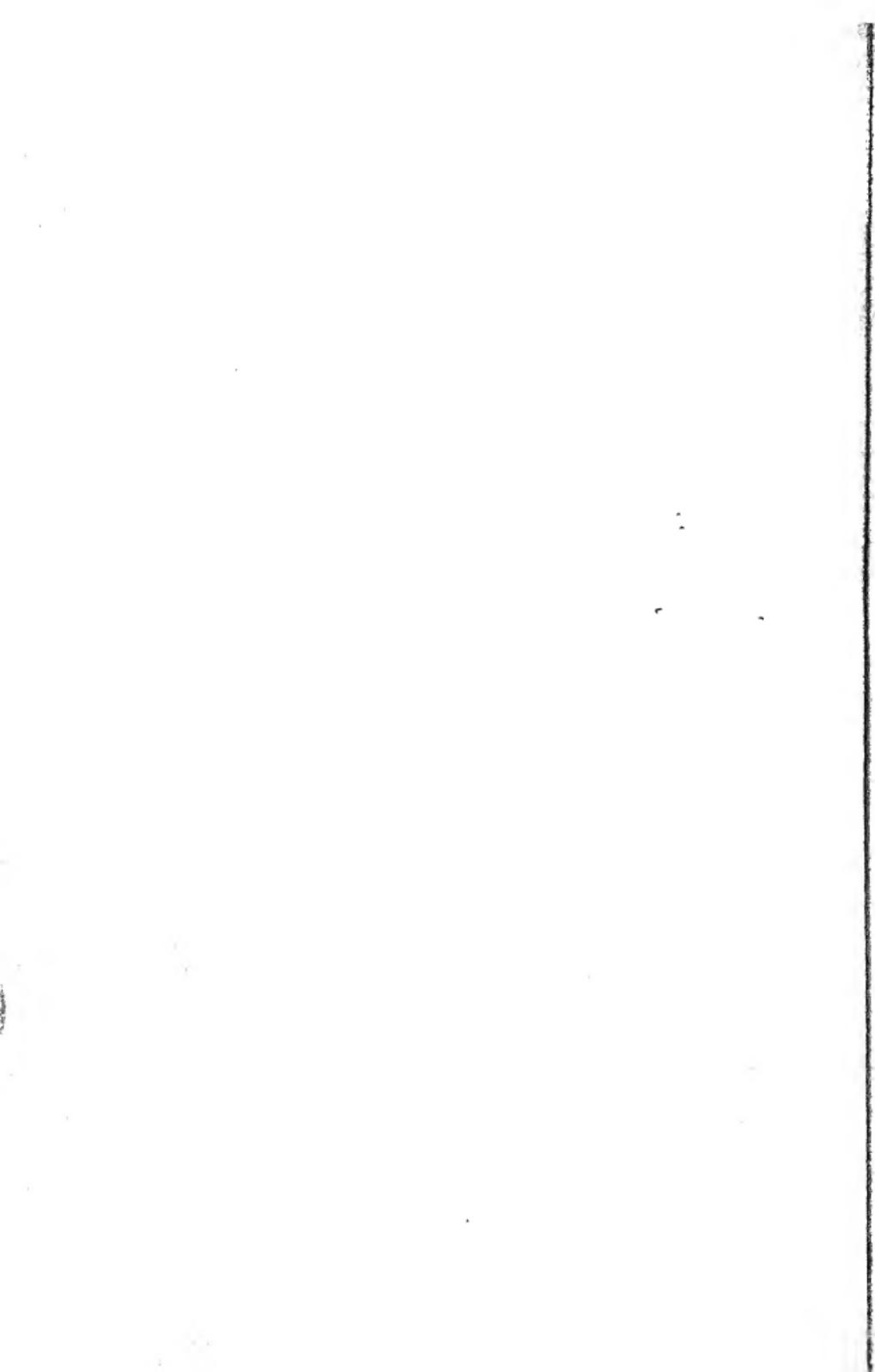
men, speech, the fashion and mode of his speech, was with him the expression and the revelation of character. In that striking personality—vivid, masterful, resolute, tenacious—there were no blurred or nebulous outlines, there were no relaxed fibres, there were no moods of doubt and hesitation, there were no pauses of lethargy.

This is not the occasion, even if the time had yet come, to review or to attempt to pass a judgment on his political career. Nor can I personally speak of him with the advantage of that special and intimate knowledge which only comes to men who have shared one another's counsels, and who have fought side by side year after year. But there are certain characteristics stamped on his work which are independent of the vicissitudes of political judgment, and some of which, I think, are the more worthy of remark because he was a man of severely practical aims. First I note genuine sympathy, which never failed him, with the precarious lot of those who in one way or another fall victims to the stress and strain of our social and industrial life. Another is the imaginative quality which suffused and coloured, not only his language, but his ideas when he confronted the larger issues of national policy. Lastly, may I not say, no statesman of our own, or perhaps of any time, surpassed him in the two great qualities of confidence and courage—confidence, buoyant and

unperturbed, in the justice of his cause ; courage, persistent and undismayed, in its steadfast pursuit. Such a personality naturally and necessarily attracts both enthusiastic support and determined hostility. He and I have exchanged many blows, particularly in the latest enterprise of his active career. Though he was an unsparing, he was always a generous antagonist, and I rejoice to remember that we never ceased to be friends. It was the will of Providence that the closing years of his life should be darkened by a great affliction. The hero of countless fights in the open field was called upon to show that he had also the passive courage which can face with undimmed eyes the most tragic fate that can befall a man of action. The hours of weakness and weariness borne with manly patience and fortitude, have passed, and he has been granted his release. It is fitting that within these walls—where the echoes of his voice seem to many of us still to linger—we should suspend for a few hours the clash of controversy, while we all join in acknowledging our common debt to the life and the example of a great Englishman. I beg to move that the House do now adjourn.

XIV

SIR H. CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN



XIV

SIR H. CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN

MR. SPENDER'S BIOGRAPHY*

I

IF it ever became my fate to have my biography written—a contingency which I shall do my best to render impossible—there are no hands to which I would rather that the task was entrusted than those of my old and much valued friend, Mr. J. A. Spender. Some of the characteristic qualities of his mind—such as shrewdness and balance of judgment, intellectual tact, unerring taste, and a gentle but incisive contempt for the faults and foibles of those who are concerned in the making of history—are invaluable in a biographer, and are abundantly illustrated in this book.

As a critic, I have only one complaint to bring against it: that it does not sufficiently distinguish between the functions of the biographer and those of the historian. For example,

* "The Life of the Rt. Hon. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, G.C.B." By J. A. Spender. (Hodder and Stoughton, 42s.)

some 170 pages are occupied with a narrative, written with full knowledge and with admirable impartiality, of South African affairs, from the Jameson raid onwards, and their reactions upon home politics and upon the personal relations of individuals and groups. It is quite true that it was during, and largely in consequence of, these transactions that "C.-B." was first realized as a distinct personality by a large number of his fellow countrymen. But Mr. Spender has given us a great deal of detail which, though of much interest to the historian, throws no direct, and little indirect, light on the main subject of his theme.

After this preliminary grumble, which is equally applicable to almost all the copious biographies of Victorian statesmen which have appeared in such profusion during the last twenty years, there is nothing to say which is not commendatory and admiring of the manner in which Mr. Spender has performed his task.

It was a task of exceptional difficulty, both on the public and the private side. "C.-B." entered the House of Commons in 1868, when he was thirty-two; he was within three years given a subordinate post in the War Office in the Liberal Government of the day. He went out with his party in 1874, and between then and 1880 took little part in the stirring controversies of the time and was known to his fellow members and to the

public in the main as a "military specialist." On the return of the Liberals to power in 1880 he resumed his old inconspicuous office, and, as Mr. Spender truly says, "of young men of his time [he was then forty-four] few would have been thought less likely than he to qualify for the position of Prime Minister."

Nor in the fifteen years which followed did the prospect of any such future become more likely to anybody ; least of all to himself. He was always personally very popular, and regarded as a safe and capable man, who never indulged in any freaks of independence, a good thorough-going partisan, and an inevitable member of any Liberal Government. His official life, with the exception of the brief interlude when he was successively Secretary to the Admiralty and Chief Secretary for Ireland (he was called by Mr. T. P. O'Connor the "Sandbag Chief Secretary"), was spent entirely in the War Office, of which he became Secretary of State in 1886 and again in 1892.

In military policy and administration he was no innovator, but content to follow in the steps of Cardwell, the greatest War Minister of the Victorian era, who introduced short service and the linked battalions, abolished purchase, got rid of the dual control of the Army by the War Office and the Horse Guards, and established the supremacy of the civilian

Secretary of State. All these beneficent reforms "C.-B." regarded as an almost sacred legacy, and he was always on the alert to frustrate any encroachment upon them. Probably he will be best remembered, in the office where he served so long, for the change which he made in 1895 in the status of the Commander-in-Chief, and the marvellous combination of tact and tenacity by which he secured the assent both of Queen Victoria and the Duke of Cambridge.

Though we had been for a number of years fellow Scotch members, he on the Front Bench and I behind, I came for the first time into close relations with him when we sat together in Mr. Gladstone's and Lord Rosebery's Cabinets between 1892 and 1895. My recollection, which I think will be confirmed by our few surviving colleagues (now not more than four), is that he rarely took any active part in general Cabinet discussions, though he was always ready to play the much-needed rôle of an emollient influence in an atmosphere in which friction was the order of the day.

It may be gathered from a private letter of February 12, 1895, which Mr. Spender prints, where on the whole his personal sympathies lay. Among "the things against us," he puts the "sulks and despondency of a certain great man of my near acquaintance." "The Prime Minister," he adds, "is most patient and good-

natured, but his difficulties on this ground are prodigious." He was also invaluable in smoothing down matters with the venerable Queen, who, in the language used to him at Balmoral by one of her daughters, was "terribly exercised and hurt" by Sir W. Harcourt's Budget, and by the attitude of her Ministers to the House of Lords. "We must" (he reports her saying to him) "have a check against the House of Commons, which is too strong, and has been ever since Lord Beaconsfield's most unfortunate Act." "C.-B.," though the most tactful of men, was never lacking in courage, and both the form and the substance of his reply to the Royal admonitions make it well worth reading. (Nov. 7, 1894.)

He was now (1895) in his fifty-ninth year. It is a sufficient indication of his feeling that his political ambitions were satisfied that, to the surprise of his colleagues, in the spring of 1895 he let it be known that he desired the vacant Speakership, to which he would without doubt have been elected without opposition. "My ambitions," he wrote to Sir W. Harcourt, "do not permanently lie, nor do my powers, in a fighting direction." The Queen, the Prime Minister, Sir W. Harcourt, and all his Cabinet colleagues (not to mention his own constituents) combined, with a unanimity which in those days was both rare and refreshing, to veto the project,

and he allowed it to drop, with deep and undisguised disappointment. Lord Holland used to say that each of the Speakers of his time had been described in his day as "the best Speaker ever known," with one exception—Lord Grenville, afterwards Prime Minister in the Government of All the Talents: "and he was the only man of real ability among them." I think it more than doubtful whether "C.-B." would have found a permanent home in the Chair. The Government ran a "dark horse"—Mr. Gully—who after an exciting race just won by a short head. Mr. Gardiner (in his admirable biography of Sir W. Harcourt) records a characteristic note from Mr. Balfour to Sir William: "I have no doubt that our people will run Ridley, but I do not anticipate any unpleasantness. I must get somebody to point out Gully to me in the House. I am told he is better looking than our man."

The Rosebery Administration was tottering to its fall, from internal much more than external causes; when (such are the paradoxes of politics) its career was suddenly cut short by a successful motion to reduce the salary of perhaps its most popular member, Mr. Campbell-Bannerman. The next day the Cabinet met, and discussed the alternatives of resignation and dissolution. Both Lord Rosebery and Sir W. Harcourt went strongly for resignation, and, as it was one of the

infrequent occasions on which they had ever agreed, they carried the day, in spite of what I thought at the time, and still think, the wiser opinion of many, perhaps the majority, of their colleagues. In the disastrous General Election which followed "C.-B." was one of the few Ministers who increased their majority. Harcourt and Morley were both defeated at the poll. "C.-B." at once left for his favourite autumn resort, Marienbad, with the remark in a farewell letter to his cousin: "We must send politics to the devil for six months at least."

In the next three years (1895-1898), except for the share which he took in the much-criticized Committee on the Jameson raid, he found things as a rule "woefully dull." In October, 1897, he writes: "I have to 'address' my people on the 25th, and I have not an idea what to say. 'John' (*i.e.*, Mr. Morley) and Asquith have been perambulating these counties, and the *Scotsman* (who must know) declares there is nothing new in all their outpourings." On the sudden resignation of leadership by Lord Rosebery in October, 1896, "he frankly said" (Mr. Spender tells us) "that, greatly as he deplored, he was not surprised at Lord Rosebery's decision." Two years later, for reasons which have never been satisfactorily explained, Sir William Harcourt followed suit, and threw up the post of Liberal leader in the House of Commons, with the concurrence of

Mr. Morley, who announced to his constituents that he also would "no longer take an active or responsible part in the formal counsels of the Liberal Party."

It is a curious fact that both these wholly unexpected resignations—Lord Rosebery's and Sir W. Harcourt's—were sprung upon the world with no previous consultation with even their most intimate political friends. I well remember when Harcourt and Morley, without a word of warning, retired to their tents, not only the consternation of the whole Liberal Party, but the bewilderment of the bereaved quartette—"C.-B.," Fowler, Bryce, and myself—who were the only survivors in the House of Commons of the Rosebery Cabinet. We had not a moment's hesitation as to which of us was best fitted to fill the vacant place, and on Dec. 19, 1898, I wrote to "C.-B." to express our earnest and united hope that he would see his way to take the leadership.

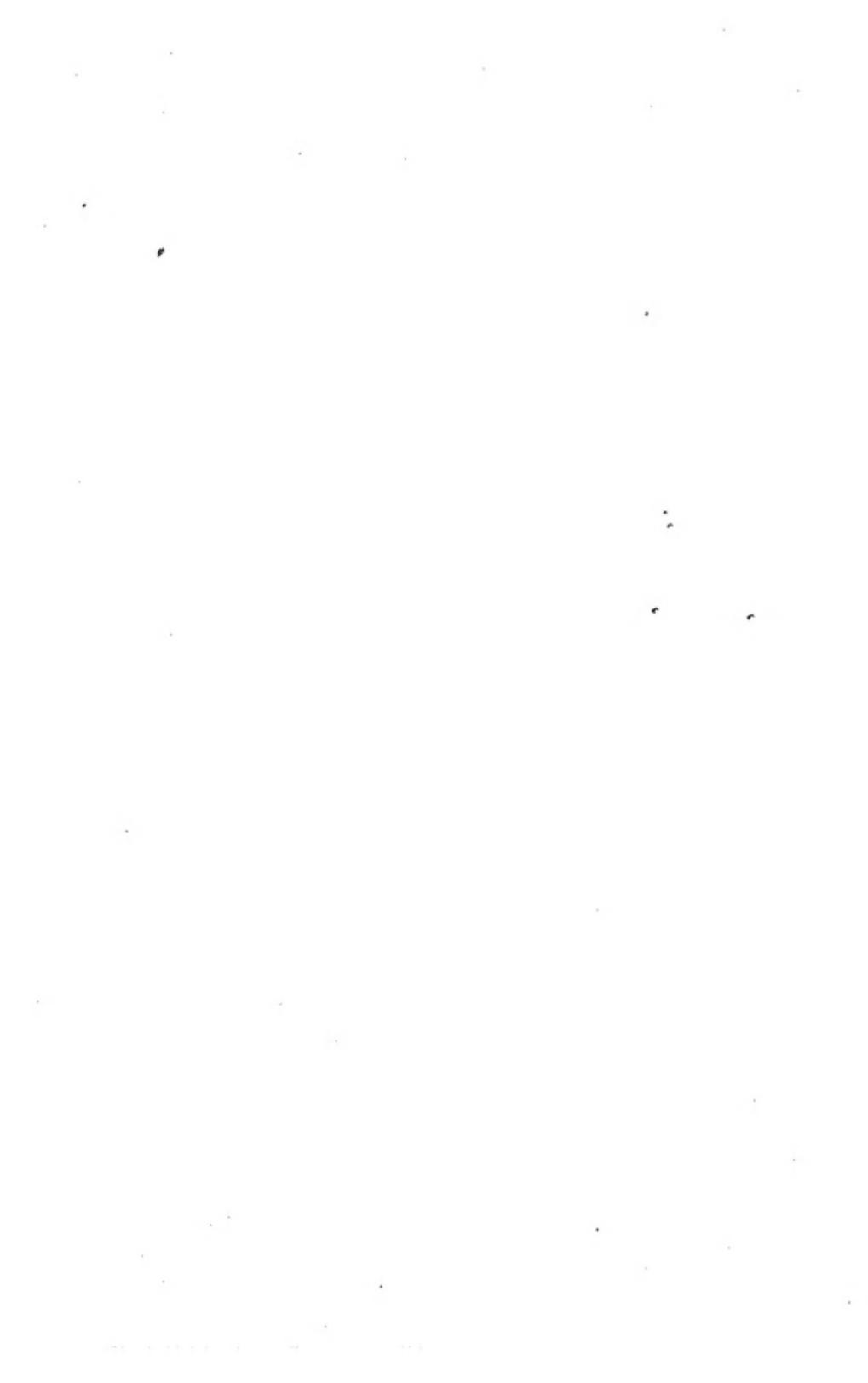
In a letter to Lord Rosebery (January 6, 1899) he does not conceal his indignation at the inconsiderateness which (as he justly thought), for no adequate reason, had created an untoward and wholly unnecessary situation; and, while disclaiming with transparent sincerity any desire to occupy the unenvied vacancy, he declares that if "the general feeling runs that way . . . I could not in that case refuse." He adds,

characteristically enough, with a reference to Herodotus: "If it should turn out otherwise, so far from being chagrined, I should exclaim with my favourite character in history :

*οὐ φροντίς Ἐπποκλείδη**

On February 6, 1899, at a meeting of the Liberal members of the House of Commons, convened according to precedent at the Reform Club, a resolution was unanimously carried that Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman be requested to undertake the leadership of the party in that House. The rank and file, Mr. Spender tells us, "heaved a sigh of relief," and for the next nine years, troubled enough in many ways, he sustained the labours and anxieties of a post as arduous as any that, for the best part of a hundred years, a British statesman had been called upon to fill.

* "Hippoclides don't care."



XV

SIR H. CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN

l

XV

SIR H. CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN

II

THE first three years of "C.-B.'s" leadership were not made easy for him by fortune, or perhaps we may add by his colleagues and followers. This was due to no want of personal affection, but to cross-currents which were set in motion by honest differences of opinion in the Liberal Party on matters arising out of the South African War. The whole story is told in great detail by Mr. Spender, and, as I have said before, with admirable balance of judgment and impartiality of temper. To the historian who wishes to understand the situation, and to appreciate the conflicting points of view, his narrative will be invaluable.

I took too active a part in some of these transactions to venture upon a judicial survey. I may say, however, that Mr. Spender is perfectly right when he writes of the "Liberal Imperialists"

—of whom I was one—that “they were not a Whig group. . . . The more influential of them were convinced Liberals and Radicals, inclining rather to the left wing than to the right on domestic affairs.” This was illustrated in the “khaki” election of 1900, when there was no crossfighting between Liberals, and Mr. Chamberlain’s invectives, and the famous slogan, “Every vote given to a Liberal is a vote given to a Boer,” were impartially directed against Liberal candidates of every complexion and shade. The election, indeed, completely failed in its main object; on balance, the Opposition as a whole lost no more than four seats.

The use made of the majority, after the war was over, to pass what all Liberals regarded as reactionary legislation, such as the Education and Licensing Acts, served to consolidate the party, and rendered it once more a united and effective Opposition. A still greater piece of good fortune befell it in Mr. Chamberlain’s maladroit fiscal adventure. In all these controversies “C.-B.” took a leading part, with the loyal and wholehearted support of his colleagues in the House of Commons.

The general result was that by the middle of 1905 Mr. Balfour’s Government, with a depleted personnel, a divided party, and a programme of “inquiry,” was, to all intents and purposes, moribund. He resolved to have a last throw of

the dice, and on December 4, while Parliament was in recess, he suddenly resigned.

Mr. Balfour was reputed at that time to be a past-master of political tactics. He had been exhibiting for more than two years a series of adroit and astonishing feats in the art of plate-spinning. It was believed by many that, by the *coup de théâtre* to which he now resorted, he would succeed in the operation, of which a previous Tory Prime Minister forty years before had boasted—that of “dishing the Whigs.” His idolaters would have scoffed at the idea that so wily a performer could be out-maneuvred by the “plain and simple” Campbell-Bannerman. Yet this is precisely what happened.

“C.-B.” arrived in London the same morning, and on the following day (Tuesday, December 5) he accepted without any hesitation the King’s Commission to form a Government, the composition of which, so far as all the principal offices were concerned, was finally settled by midnight on Thursday, December 7. There were, as Mr. Spender truly says, “many on the door-step of 29, Belgrave Square”—some of them driven there by curiosity, others by the pangs of the *sacra fames*, which at such times rages among political aspirants. Some of the more hardy ones got over the threshold, and even succeeded in penetrating for a few moments into the Prime Minister’s sanctum. Mr. Gladstone once said

to me : “ If ever you have to form a Government, you must steel your nerves, and act the butcher ”: a piece of very sound advice (as I learned from experience). “ C.-B.,” though a man of thoroughly amiable character, had a useful touch of leather in his composition, and showed that he could wield the pole-axe with discrimination and even with severity.

Not that the days between Tuesday and Friday were free from worries and anxieties. There were dark rumours of an “ intrigue,” of which I was supposed by some to be pulling the strings, to “ jockey ‘ C.-B.’ out of the leadership.” Mischief-makers, who abound at such times, insinuated to Sir Henry that the King himself (who was personally much more attached to him than to any of the rest of his new Ministers) had been induced to join the “ intrigue,” and for that reason had suggested to him the taking of a peerage “ to relieve the strain on his health.” The King (it may be observed) was not alone in this view. We now know from Mr. Spender that only a few days later “ C.-B.” received from the physician who knew him best, Dr. Ott, of Marienbad, the same advice. The doctor refers to a discussion which had taken place some time before at Marienbad between Sir Henry, Lady Campbell-Bannerman, and himself. “ I remember very well,” he writes, “ that we all three agreed that for your precious health it would be

best for you to go to the House of Lords before occupying (*sic*) the Government."

It was not, however, on this ground that, as early as the Monday evening, Sir Edward Grey pressed the same course upon the new Prime Minister. Sir Edward had for many years been Lord Rosebery's most intimate political friend, and was very reluctant in any case to enter a Cabinet of which he was not a member. If that was impossible, he felt that he could not come in unless the declarations of policy in one House or the other were in the hands of those with whom he had been most closely associated.

Anything less like an "intrigue" it is difficult to imagine. I myself accepted the Chancellorship of the Exchequer the next day without any conditions. I was, of course, most anxious that Sir E. Grey should be brought in, as (apart from our friendship and long association) I was certain that he was the only man among us who had all the qualifications for the Foreign Office. I therefore did what I could to urge "C.-B.," who, as Mr. Spender rightly says, had been "wounded and surprised" by Grey's communication, to meet his request. We debated the matter together with the utmost friendliness in all its aspects—not excluding that of health—and on the Wednesday he seemed inclined to reconsider the point, but reserved his decision till he had

consulted his wife, who was to arrive in London that evening.

Lady Campbell-Bannerman, as long as she lived, was a potent and often a dominating factor in his political life. It was her advice (it would seem) that mainly weighed with him when he accepted the leadership in the Commons in 1899. On this occasion she at once solved his doubts, and (forgetting, perhaps, the consultation at Marienbad) "declared," as Mr. Spender puts it, "for no surrender." The next morning (Thursday) I saw him, and learnt his final decision. Sir E. Grey, who at first persisted in his refusal, was induced, largely through the friendly counsels of Mr. Arthur Acland, to withdraw it, and on Friday it was publicly announced that he and Mr. Haldane were to be Secretaries of State in the new Cabinet.

Never did two Ministers, occupying the highest places, work more harmoniously together than did Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and Sir Edward Grey in the two succeeding years. Mr. Spender has published a letter from Sir Edward, dated December 31, 1907, in which he gracefully confesses that his forecasts had turned out wrong, and adds that "your presence in the House of Commons has been not only desirable but essential . . . and so it continues to be." A week before (December 22) Sir Henry, in what turned out to be his last speech to his con-

stituents, had exclaimed : " Foreign relations, indeed ! Why, by common consent, never have they been managed with more conspicuous ability and success than by Sir Edward Grey."

There is nothing in this episode which, in my judgment, reflects the faintest discredit upon any of those concerned. It is abundantly clear that not one of them was actuated in any degree by self-seeking motives.

The new Government, when completed, was what used to be called in the eighteenth century a " broad-bottomed Administration." In a sense its formation may be called a gamble, for it had at once to face the uncertainties of a General Election. The strength of its personnel was an unpleasant surprise to those who had taken for granted that the Liberal Party was rent by irreconcilable feuds, and had no doubt something to do with the sweeping electoral victory, unparalleled since the days of the first Reform Act, which it won the next month (January, 1906) at the polls.

In the new Parliament " C.-B. " found himself in a position of personal authority which was, perhaps, unique. Mr. Gladstone, in his palmiest days, had never had at his command such an overwhelming, and in some ways embarrassing, majority in the House of Commons. Though by no means a supreme Parliamentarian, in the sense of technical equipment for debate, the new

Prime Minister enjoyed the devoted and loyal confidence of his big battalions, and the tardy but always growing respect of the Opposition. The great and lasting achievement of his term of office was the substitution in South Africa, for the lop-sided and abortive Lyttelton "Constitution," of a system of complete self-Government on the broadest and most generous lines, which was denounced by Mr. Balfour as a "dangerous, audacious, and reckless experiment."

Another act of cardinal importance was the reconstruction of the Army under Mr. Haldane's scheme in 1907, with which "C.-B.," though (as we have seen) not disposed to be an innovator in military affairs, was in full sympathy, and which also received from the Opposition its full share of invective and ridicule. "To measure its importance," says Mr. Spender, "it is only necessary to reflect what the situation of this country would have been if in August, 1914, its military condition had been what it was on the outbreak of the Boer War in October, 1899."

But, in the main, the new House of Commons with its unexampled majority found itself reduced to legislative impotence. Measure after measure was rejected by the House of Lords, or sent back mutilated and crippled beyond the possibility of adoption or even recognition. After much deliberation, the Government resolved

to proceed on the lines of the Suspensory Veto, originally suggested by Mr. Bright, and one of "C.-B.'s" last Parliamentary deliverances was his speech in the House of Commons in June, 1907, proposing the resolution which was ultimately embodied in legislative form in the Parliament Act.

In August, 1906, Lady Campbell-Bannerman's long sufferings at last came to an end. The story of the relations of husband and wife, as told by Mr. Spender, is of the most moving character. There can be no doubt that his assiduous and devoted attendance upon her undermined his strength and shortened his days. Thenceforward he led a maimed life, continuing for eighteen months to do his daily job with unfailing tenacity and courage, but with the mainspring of his activities irreparably broken.

I endeavoured after his death, in a speech in the House of Commons, which Mr. Spender has quoted in full, to give an estimate of him as I knew him. I have nothing to add to it now. His was by no means the simple personality which many people supposed; it had its complexities and apparent incongruities, and, even to those who were most intimate with him, sometimes its baffling features. But of all the men with whom I have been associated in public life, I put him as high as any in sense of duty, and in both moral and intellectual courage. Nothing

can be truer, or more characteristic of the man, than what he says of himself, in a homely speech to his neighbours at Montrose, a few months before his death :

" Altogether, I have no fault to find with anybody. And it is because I have no fault to find with anybody that I am where I am. . . . It has not been by my seeking that I am where I am. . . . An old friend of mine, Wilfrid Lawson . . . was accustomed to say : ' The man who walks on a straight road never loses his way.' Well, I flatter myself that I have walked on a pretty straight road, probably because it was easier, and, accordingly, I have not gone astray. I trust that that will be continued to the last, which cannot be long deferred now."



